

**United States Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration**

International Border Bridge Project Peer Exchange

Oakdale, Minnesota – June 14, 2012



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**U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration**

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International Border Project Peer Exchange Report Oakdale, Minnesota

I. Summary

The following report summarizes an international border project peer exchange in Oakdale, Minnesota held on Thursday, June 14, 2012. The workshop was a one-day technical session that provided an overview of the international border project development process. This exchange was conceived in part based on a request from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to receive technical assistance for their international border project. The Maine Department of Transportation (Maine DOT) was judged to be a match for the issues Minnesota wished to learn more about by virtue of their recent development of a major bridge project between Calais, Maine and St. Stephen, New Brunswick. The Federal Highway Administration Border Team worked with the FHWA Minnesota Division and the Minnesota Department of Transportation helped to organize the exchange. The FHWA Border Team also worked with Maine DOT to coordinate a workshop format and list of topics for the Exchange. Other states involved in current or future international border projects were also invited to participate in the exchange. Representatives from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the New York State Department of Transportation, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation came to Oakdale as well. Staff members from the General Services Administration were also on hand to offer their experiences and expertise in border project management issues.

The Maine project at Calais/St. Stephen was used as a case study for the peer exchange and this format helped frame many of the issues that Minnesota hoped to explore. MnDOT is beginning the project planning process for the bridge that links Baudette, Minnesota and Rainy River, Ontario. Event participants learned about the details of the Maine project and discussed many facets of the project development process including planning, permitting, environmental, design, construction and implementation. Also discussed were potential project challenges, successful strategies, and lessons learned.

The workshop was designed to maximize free-flowing discussion and set up in a way that attendees could ask specific questions throughout the Exchange. The workshop kicked off with introductions of the attendees and a brief summary of Minnesota's Baudette bridge project. The Exchange then seamlessly moved to the Maine case study which was presented by Ernie Martin, Maine DOT and Bill Plumpton, Gannett Fleming. The rest of the program was divided into modules that focused on specific issues related to border project development including planning, permitting, environmental, design, construction, and implementation. The modules were operated as "roundtable" type discussions with the speakers from Maine answering pre-submitted questions from Minnesota as well as taking questions from the attendees. Chris Dingman from FHWA served as the Exchange moderator introducing the speakers and insuring that the sessions ran on time and that attendees were able to ask and answer questions. See [Appendix A](#) for a list of key contacts from FHWA and the workshop agenda. FHWA served as the organizers of the Exchange and funded the travel costs for the State DOT attendees that came to Minneapolis from outside Minnesota. See [Appendix B](#) for a complete list of attendees and [Appendix C](#) for the biographical sketches for the two presenters representing the Maine project.

II. Background

Growing travel and trade between the United States and Canada make border crossings a key contributor to our Nation's economic health. Recognizing the value of cross-border travel and trade, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is working with its State, Federal, and international partners to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods across borders.

This Peer Exchange allows FHWA to reach out to State and Federal partners and provide a forum for information exchange, as well as the sharing of practical expertise, and technical assistance.

The meeting room contained conference call capabilities complete with a speaker phone. A dedicated FHWA teleconferencing line was used so that those individuals that were unable to travel to the meeting location could participate. David Franklin from FHWA and Ralph Scalise from GSA joined the meeting via telephone.

III. Presentations and Discussion

A. Welcome

Chris Dingman, FHWA Northern Border Specialist - Michigan Division Office

Mr. Dingman welcomed participants to the workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to encourage conversation and answer questions related to transportation projects that link the United States and Canada. The idea for this workshop came out of a request that the Minnesota DOT made related to their future bridge project at Baudette/Rainy River. Maine DOT was identified as a peer for Minnesota based on the project that Maine DOT led with New Brunswick DOT at Calais, ME/St. Stephen, NB. In an effort to bring additional information, resources, and perspectives to the table, representatives from Michigan, New York, and Vermont were also invited to attend as well as the General Services Administration. All in attendance had the opportunity to introduce themselves and to talk briefly about what they hoped to learn by participating in the Exchange. Representatives from Minnesota DOT provided a brief overview and status report of their bridge project as part of the introductions.

B. Case Study

Ernie Martin, Maine Department of Transportation and Bill Plumpton, Gannett-Fleming

Mr. Martin and Mr. Plumpton provided two slide presentations detailing the most important aspects of the Calais/St. Stephen project. One presentation was about the project development process and provided insight into the major issues that were encountered on the project. The other presentation was a series of photographs that followed the project from concept to implementation. Mr. Martin provided additional background information on the history of the project as the pictures showed the development of the bridge and surrounding infrastructure. Copies of the slide presentations are provided on the Attachments CD to this report.

C. Question and Answer Sessions

Below are the questions/issues that were asked/identified in advance of the Peer Exchange by the Minnesota DOT and the FHWA Border Team. While the question and answer sessions during the Exchange were broken out by topic, the questions and answers listed

here are provided in the order that they were submitted by MnDOT and FHWA prior to the meeting.

Q: Could copies of the project agreements with the Canadian Province be made available?

A: Electronic copies of project agreements were provided by Maine and are included as part of the Peer Exchange CD. A list of the files available from the Peer Exchange is referenced later in the report and all files are available by request to FHWA.

Q: What issues were encountered in working with customs/border enforcement?

A: The presenters indicated that involving both border enforcement agencies (U.S. and Canada) very early in the project development process helped the project run much more smoothly. There may be site specific issues related to security.

Q: Process for getting Americans qualified to work in Canada (and vice versa?) What would disqualify Americans from working in Canada (e.g. DUI's?)

A: State of Maine presenters indicated that workers with Driving/Operating While Under the Influence or related citations would be a non-starter. Potential hires who had these types of offenses on their records could not be hired.

Q: Are there requirements related to the source of materials – e.g. US vs. Canadian Steel?

A: Requirements related to the source of materials such as steel will depend on whether or not the project is a federally funded project. If federal funds are being used on the project, federal law related to Buy American provisions will apply.

Q: What are the payment requirements and related labor rates for this type of project?

A: Similar to the materials question, if the project is funded with federal funds, certain pay rates have to be in place as required by federal law. In spite of these additional requirements, the recommendation from our presenters was to use federal funding on projects so that as a project manager, there would be support from federal partners.

Q: How did the contractor deal with damage claims (if any) from motorists on either side of the border?

A: Our speakers did not have much experience dealing with this issue. Damage claims during construction were minimal.

Q: Was the project developed separately by the Canadians and US or collaboratively?

A: The US served as the managers of the project in its entirety but worked very closely with the Canadians on all aspects of the project.

Q: How did the permit applications from the regulatory agencies go? Did each country/agency need to apply separately or could this be done collaboratively?

A: While each country had to follow its own regulatory rules, there was significant partnering by transportation agencies on both sides of the border. Information was accumulated, shared, and submitted based on those regulatory rules for both Canada and the United States.

Q: Ontario has a prequalified contractor list while Minnesota has low bid. What was the situation in Maine and how was this handled? What contracting method was used?

A: Maine served as the project managers for their bridge project so they followed their contracting and bidding rules. Maine uses a QBS (Qualification Based Selection) process. Additional information on this item can be secured by contacting the State of

Maine directly or by accessing the State of Maine's website. There is specific information for those entities that are interested in doing work for the State.

Q: Was there one construction contract or several?

A: There were five contracts related to the entire border crossing project. The listing and time frame of each of the projects is listed in the Calais-St. Stephen Border Crossing power point presentation.

Q: What was the regulatory agency involvement on each side of the border?

A: The regulatory agency involvement on each side of the border was extensive. A listing of the agencies involved and details about their involvement are listed in the power point presentation cited in the previous question.

Q: How was public involvement handled?

A: As the agency with the lead responsibility for the project, Maine DOT coordinated public involvement but worked closely with the province of New Brunswick. All efforts between the two agencies were coordinated and meetings were held regularly so that stakeholders were aware of how the project was progressing. Maine DOT held some of the public involvement meetings in New Brunswick. Maine DOT developed a comprehensive plan for communicating with other partner agencies and stakeholders and used that plan to keep interested parties informed as the project developed.

FHWA Border Team Questions

Q: Who did Maine work with in Canada (provincial, federal) and at what part of the process were they brought into the project? Any lessons learned with the way you worked with the Canadians?

A: The main Canadian agencies that were involved with the project were New Brunswick DOT, Transport Canada, Canadian Border Services Agency, Canada Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Foreign Affairs Canada (DFAIT), and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Maine explained that any difficulties encountered with Canada were more of a function of differences in the laws of each country, not in the dealing with project counterparts across the border.

Q: How were the differences in the environmental processes between the two countries handled? Did that pose any problems in the timing of approvals for moving the project forward?

A: Canada and the US have very different environmental processes. Despite the differences, every attempt was made to develop and maintain parallel processes. There were points in time where each side fell behind the other as the process moved forward. There is a more detailed explanation of the specifics in the Calais-St. Stephen Border Project power point presentation.

Q: Was there any pushback from other agencies or the public related to any elements of the projects or were there unforeseen challenges that cropped up along the way? If so, how was that dealt with?

A: Maine cited their extensive public involvement as being integral in heading off potential project issues and minimizing pushback. As far as unforeseen issues, Maine found that issues dealing with income tax, duties, taxes on equipment, and having a bi-national workforce were very complex. A lot more time was spent dealing with these issues than was originally planned.

Q: How do items like Buy American and Davis-Bacon impact the project?

A: These issues were addressed with an earlier question.

Q: How was the Maine project funded?

A: The project was funded with state and provincial funds from Maine and New Brunswick.

Q: Were there any federal funds utilized on this project?

A: No.

Q: With Minnesota's project dealing with an existing crossing versus Maine's project being a new crossing, does Maine have any thoughts about potential issues that may come up especially as it relates to the environmental or project development process?

A: The point that was reiterated most by the presenters was that if they were to do a similar project in the future, they would use Federal funds for the project and bring Federal partners into the process.

D. Wrap Up

The final session of the day was a wrap-up/final overview by the main presenters and the workshop planners. Final questions were posed and answered and attendees were asked to provide their impressions of how the Exchange went and whether it addressed their needs. A couple of questions from the wrap-up were further exploration of questions that are listed in the previous section. A number of quotes from attendees are provided in the next section of the report.



IV. Conclusion

In an attempt to measure the value and effectiveness of the training it provides, FHWA asks for detailed feedback from Peer Exchange participants. The comments of those attendees that chose to provide feedback are provided below.

“I wanted to thank you for your efforts in providing the Peer Exchange in Minneapolis. I found it most useful and have shared the information with my Vermont team.” – Mike Hedges, Vermont AOT

“Perhaps the greatest value was the resource we gained by meeting folks who have been through this already and are willing to be of assistance to us. In addition to that, the peer exchange provided me with a greater understanding of the steps and hurdles that lie ahead of us with our international border bridge project. But it also gave me a level of confidence that any hurdles we will encounter are not insurmountable. Thanks for arranging the workshop and giving us the opportunity to gain these insights.” – Tony Lesch, Minnesota DOT

“The peer exchange was extremely beneficial for attendees as well as those presenting material. Everyone took away many ways to make their own work better and deliver it more efficiently and quicker.” – Bill Plumpton, Gannett Fleming

“Thank you again for all the work you put into this exchange. It is safe to say this exchange answered a lot of our questions as far as how to exchange money between countries, how to have contractors perform work in Canada and coordination with border services. It has given us several ideas on how to move forward with our project and has also allowed us to develop a relationship with someone who has been through it. That part will likely be invaluable as we will feel comfortable asking “how did you handle this” as things develop down the road.” – J.T. Anderson, Minnesota DOT

“The peer exchange was extremely beneficial, anytime you can hear other State and Federal agencies knowledge and experiences can only enhance project process and development.” – Ernie Martin, Maine DOT

“You probably saved us a couple of million dollars today.” – Craig Collison, Minnesota DOT

V. Acknowledgements

The Exchange organizers would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance:

Ernie Martin, Maine DOT and Bill Plumpton, Gannett Fleming for your expertise, professionalism, and skill in conveying your experiences at Calais/St. Stephen. It was obvious to everyone that the two of you knew your topic inside and out.

J.T. Anderson and Tony Lesch from Minnesota DOT for being such gracious hosts, providing a meeting space, coordinating all of the technology needs, arranging for a delicious lunch and providing the pictures of the bridge used in this report.

Brian Hogge and David Scott from the FHWA Minnesota Division office for your contributions to the Exchange.

Jim Cheatham, Roger Petzold, Dave Franklin, and Travis Black for your continued support in helping FHWA provide international border technical assistance to our partners.

VI. Attachments CD Table of Contents

The files listed below were provided by the Peer Exchange presenters, Ernie Martin from the Maine Department of Transportation and Bill Plumpton from Gannett-Fleming. The files are listed in order of size from largest to smallest. All of these files have been compiled on CD and are available through FHWA. If interested, please use the contact information in Appendix A to request copies.

- Bridge Construction.ppt (Slide presentation displaying numerous construction drawings and pictures related to the development of the project)
- MDOT_01-#690833-v1-CONTRACT_BOOK_CALAIS_ST_STEPHENS.pdf (Maine's contract book for the project)
- Permit #NAE-2006-704.pdf (Army Corps of Engineers permit for the project)
- DEP Permit.pdf (State of Maine Department of Environmental Protection permit)
- Calais - St Stephen Border Crossing.ppt (Slide presentation that was used for the Case Study discussion in the morning session at the Peer Exchange. This presentation provides the general project overview as well as an in-depth discussion on a number of the major issues that came up during the project)
- International Agreement between Maine and New Brunswick 8483.pdf and .tif (Project agreement between Maine and New Brunswick in two formats)
- St Croix Riv-me 16591-16.7H.pdf (Coast Guard permit for the project)
- CALAIS_PREBID_TRANSCRIPT_3_28_06.txt (Transcript of the Pre-Bid meeting held by Maine DOT for all interested bidders on the project)
- Calais 2005 Fair Minimum Wage Rates.pdf (Fair minimum wage rates for the project)
- IJC Process.doc (Process related to the rules and procedures of the International Joint Commission)
- watercourse permit.pdf (Permit for Watercourse and Wetland Alterations from the province of New Brunswick)
- International Bridge Construction Points of Discussion Rev.ppt (Slide presentation highlighting construction points of discussion for the project)
- Internboardcrossdiplomnote.pdf (Letter from Canada acknowledging that the exchange of diplomatic notes had taken place)
- Calais-St Stephen Bridge GST issue 3-6-06.doc (Reference document addressing possible imbalances related to project bidders and Canadian taxes and how to best resolve the issue)

- CALAIS_LESSONS_LEARNED.doc (Summary document of major issues encountered during the project and lessons learned from those issues)
- Calais St Stephen New Border Crossing summary 0612.docx (Project fact sheet for the Calais/St. Stephen project)



Appendix A: Additional Information

Key Contacts

Key Contact	Phone	E-mail
Chris Dingman, FHWA Michigan Division	(517) 702-1830	Christopher.Dingman@dot.gov
Roger Petzold, FHWA Border Team Leader	(202) 366-4074	Roger.Petzold@dot.gov
David Franklin, FHWA Northern Border Coordinator	(708) 283-3540	David.Franklin@dot.gov

Workshop Agenda

Time	Session
8:00 am	Introduction of Attendees Chris Dingman, FHWA Michigan Division Minnesota Project Background J.T. Anderson and Tony Lesch, Minnesota DOT
9:00 am	Case Study and Overview of Calais/St. Stephen Project Ernie Martin, Maine DOT Bill Plumpton, Gannett Fleming
10:00 am	Networking Break
10:15 am	Planning/Environmental/Permitting Module All Attendees
11:15 am	Design Module Part 1 All Attendees
11:45 am	Provided Lunch in Meeting Room
12:15 pm	Design Module Part 2 All Attendees
1:15 pm	Construction Module Part 1 All Attendees
1:45 pm	Networking Break
2:00 pm	Construction Module Part 2 All Attendees
3:00 pm	Final Question and Answer Session
3:20 pm	Wrap-up Chris Dingman, FHWA Michigan Division
3:30 pm	Adjourn

Appendix B: List of Presenters and Participants

Agency	First Name	Last Name
Federal Highway Administration Minnesota Division	David	Scott
Federal Highway Administration Northern Border Specialist	Chris	Dingman
Federal Highway Administration Northern Border Team (telephone)	David	Franklin
Gannett Fleming	Bill	Plumpton
General Services Administration	Don	Melcher
General Services Administration (telephone)	Ralph	Scalise
Maine Department of Transportation	Ernie	Martin
Michigan Department of Transportation	Mohammed	Alghurabi
Minnesota Department of Transportation	JT	Anderson
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Amber	Blanchard
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Craig	Collison
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Jim	Cownie
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Jeremy	Hadrava
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Paul	Kettleson
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Tony	Lesch
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Ed	Lutgen
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Tom	Styrbicki
New York State Department of Transportation	Farhan	Haddad
Vermont Agency of Transportation	Mike	Hedges

Appendix C: Speaker Biographies

Ernie Martin, Maine Department of Transportation, is a Project Manager II, with more than 10 years of experience managing highway reconstruction and other infrastructure projects.

He has managed various highway design and construction projects throughout the State of Maine and has worked with different lead federal and State agencies including the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. EPA, the FHWA, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Fish & Wildlife, CBP and the GSA .

He has a B.S. in Business Management from the University of Maine. He is a Certified Fire Sprinkler, NICET IV engineer and holds a PE in Mechanical Engineering.

He has led Maine DOT projects, such as:

1. Calais, Maine – St. Stephen, New Brunswick Border Crossing
2. Numerous I-295 Interstate interchange and auxiliary lane projects
3. I-95, Exit 113, Roundabout and Interchange Design Project
4. Numerous State Highway Projects

Bill Plumpton, CEP, is a senior environmental planner with Gannett Fleming, Inc. with more than 25 years of experience managing the preparation of preliminary design, the NEPA process and impacts assessment and documentation, and the preparation of permit applications for transportation and other infrastructure projects.

He has provided NEPA compliance and documentation services for a wide range of actions and different lead federal agencies including the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. EPA, the FHWA, the FTA, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the FRA, and the GSA.

He has a B.S. in Environmental Resource Management from the Pennsylvania State University. He is a Certified Environmental Professional with the National Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals. He is an active member of the National Association of Environmental Professionals and serves on its board of directors.

He has led his firms' services for Land Port of Entry projects:

1. Calais, Maine – St. Stephen, New Brunswick for the MaineDOT and GSA
2. Madawaska, Maine for the GSA
3. Fort Kent, Maine – Clair, New Brunswick for the MaineDOT
4. International Falls, MN for the GSA
5. Pembina, North Dakota – Emerson, Manitoba for Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation and the NDDOT.