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Considerations for United States – Canada Border Traffic Disruption Management

2012



Public Safety
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The United States (U.S.) - Canada border is the longest in the world, spanning 5,525 miles (8,891 km) across 13 U.S. states and eight Canadian Provinces/Territories. The border supports a \$429.6 billion (2009) annual trade relationship between Canada and the U.S., which is the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world. Over five million commercial trucks cross the United States-Canada border each year. Trucks crossing the border in both directions carry \$247.6 billion (2009) in goods. In addition, approximately 300,000 individuals cross the border each day, demonstrating its integral role as both an economic and social lifeline. Delays in processing people or goods at the border will result in traffic congestion that could have a negative impact on both countries' economies and ways of life.

Certain events may cause disruptions at the U.S. – Canada border that severely limit the operations of, or close, one or more border Ports of Entry (POE). During these types of events, a large and unique set of stakeholders must act quickly and effectively to manage resulting traffic congestion at the border, which may necessitate the diversion, staging, or triage of traffic. While the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) work closely to effectively manage routine POE on a daily basis, a large-scale border disruption will require coordination with traffic management stakeholders, including private and public sector, law enforcement and government, both local and State/Provincial/Territorial and media. Prior to a large-scale disruption, these stakeholders must ensure that during an incident they are able to communicate effectively with one another, implement cross-border procedures and processes, and allocate and deploy resources to meet the specific traffic management needs of the event.

This document is the result of a series of border traffic workshops held in Niagara Falls, NY, Blaine, WA and Grand Forks, ND during 2010. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Public Safety Canada co-hosted the workshops to bring together U.S. and Canadian public- and private-sector individuals to discuss managing the flow of traffic near the border during a disruption. Participants represented numerous organizations including, U.S. and Canadian law enforcement, emergency management, border, and government officials from the local, State, Provincial/Territorial and Federal level, as well as representatives from the international trucking, shipping and brokerages industry.

This document provides a planning framework for border traffic disruptions management which requires the involvement and coordination of multiple agencies, organizations, and entities. It identifies key stakeholders in border communities and outlines critical issues to consider when developing or updating existing plans for managing the flow of traffic (people and goods) to and away from the border during a large-scale traffic disruption. It is not a prescriptive document. Rather, this document is intended to support the development of traffic management plans that are tailored to accommodate local requirements and considerations. The key considerations outlined in this document are organized across the following five sections:

- Preparedness;
- Communications and Information Management;
- Resource Management;
- Command and Management; and
- Ongoing Management and Maintenance.

Each section provides specific actions and questions for stakeholders to consider when developing and updating a traffic management plan. These actions and questions are neither comprehensive nor prescriptive; they are intended as a starting point to stimulate discussion about further actions and options. Stakeholders in border communities can utilize this document to help them develop arrangements and plans necessary to effectively manage traffic congestion associated with border delays.

Preparedness:

Preparedness is paramount to incident mitigation and will be essential for the effective management of large-scale traffic congestion caused by disruptions and delays at the U.S. - Canada border that affect either side of the border. Prior to an incident it is imperative that all border stakeholders establish strong information sharing relationships and develop, exercise, and regularly update regional/local incident response plans, including traffic management plans.

Actions to Consider	Questions to Consider
<p>Identify stakeholders and facilities that will play a key role before and during a border disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all necessary elements of the public sector represented (e.g. Federal, State/Provincial/Territorial, local/tribal political leadership, law enforcement, emergency management, regulatory agencies whose regulations may have to be waived or otherwise addressed in an emergency response, border and transportation authorities, etc.)? • Are key private sector critical infrastructure owners and operators represented (e.g., border crossing operators, customs brokers, energy representatives, trucking and trade associations, commercial shippers, emergency services, etc.)? • Are continuity plans in place for staffing key roles that may be left vacant immediately following an emergency (as normal staff members address family/home needs)? • Do continuity of operations plans exist for facilities normally used to support border management activities should these facilities be rendered non-operational during an emergency? • Do continuity of operations plans exist for the infrastructure supporting access to the border should it be rendered non-operational during an emergency?
<p>Identify the roles, responsibilities and needs (information, resources, etc.) of stakeholders before and during a border disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are roles and responsibilities identified, cataloged, and communicated to stakeholders before or during an event? • Are there any existing protocols, formal agreements, or arrangements in place outlining roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (e.g. communications procedures, information sharing processes, etc.)? If not, would developing them be beneficial to stakeholders? • Is there a system in place to notify stakeholders when there are changes to individual roles and responsibilities? • Are stakeholders liaising with Provincial/Territorial/State partners responsible for road systems, as well as policing and law enforcement agencies?

<p>Develop a regional/local border traffic management plan that includes continuity of operations planning considerations as well as procedures for moving priority traffic (goods and people) to and away from the border.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information should be included in the traffic management plan for it to be consistent with existing incident command structure and management plans? • If there are multiple crossings in a region, should the plan address the region as a single crossing point or identify specific planning considerations for each POE? • Does the plan account for any cross-jurisdictional mutual aid-or similar type agreements already in place to assist in traffic management operations during a border disruption? • Does the plan address any differences in traffic management operations/procedures based on the nature of the border delay (e.g. flood, wildfire, terrorist threat/attack, etc.)? • Does the plan address the type of goods at the border (e.g., time-sensitive dangerous goods, perishables, medicine)? • Does the plan provide special procedures for vehicles containing hazardous cargo presenting dangers to human health or the environment? • Does the plan incorporate any emergency procedures specified by a regulatory agency responsible for such oversight? • Does the plan address how to manage different levels of traffic congestion (i.e. 5-10-20 mile/kilometer backup or commercial versus non-commercial vehicles)? • Does the plan give consideration for how to manage commercial vehicles under certain restrictions (weight restrictions, priority goods enforcement, limited/extended border crossing hours for commercial vehicles, etc)? • Does the plan identify circumstances when establishing triage/staging areas for commercial/passenger vehicles en route to the border may become necessary? Does the plan outline procedures for establishing and managing these triage/staging areas as well as determine responsible authorities?
<p>Establish regular bilateral communications with cross-border counterparts on border delay and traffic management issues (e.g. CBSA and CBP, Provincial and State Police, State and local emergency managers/Public Safety officials/homeland security officials/Transportation departments).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the region have a preexisting multijurisdictional or cross-sector consortium with whom to coordinate? • Are regular meetings between key stakeholders necessary to assist in the development of a traffic management plan and address ongoing traffic management issues? • Are any joint exercises scheduled to test and make any identified improvements to the traffic management plan?

Communications and Information Management:

Effective communications and information management systems should be compatible, scalable, portable, resilient and redundant to support a coordinated and efficient response to a border disruption. Each stakeholder should have access to a common operating picture to perform their duties and share information with others to ensure decisions are made based on timely, relevant and accurate information.

Actions to Consider	Questions to Consider
<p>Establish or refine an existing regional interoperable communications network to support effective information sharing between stakeholders during a border disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there existing processes and procedures for stakeholders to share information with groups and/or individuals (both regionally and locally) in real-time (including information protection processes)? • Are there backup systems or alternate means of communicating to stakeholders should primary methods fail or be unavailable (i.e. communications contingency plans)? • What unique challenges do cross border communications present in the event of a border disruption? • Are current communications systems on both sides of the border interoperable with one another (i.e. systems that can communicate/interface with one another without reducing their efficacy)? • Do stakeholders on both sides of the border participate in regular joint-training exercises focused on the use of communications systems shared by both countries?
<p>Identify stakeholders critical to supporting a robust communications network during a border disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is stakeholder contact information shared and available before and during a border disruption? • Who/what (company, organization, computer system, etc.) would maintain and/or “own” the contact information? • How would contact information for personnel and authorities deploying from outside the region be shared with stakeholders in the region? • Does the traffic management plan identify circumstances when it may be necessary to appoint agency liaison officers to coordinate information sharing between agencies, media outlets, and the general public?
<p>Identify information requirements for stakeholders as well as types of information that should be reported out during a disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do law enforcement personnel require specific information to manage traffic (e.g. information about length of delays, diversion routes, or heightened security measures)? • If governments, CBP and/or CBSA establish priorities for specific trade commodities, who would they share that information with to ensure those goods are sent to the border for processing first? • During an incident, are stakeholders required or encouraged to participate in regular situational awareness briefings with other stakeholders, either through conference calls or other forms of media? • Are there formal reporting requirements for stakeholders (e.g. hourly briefs, conference calls, situational awareness bulletins, etc.)? • Do stakeholders require information about potentially dangerous goods being transported across the border?

<p>Establish or ensure existing information systems/media outlets can inform motorists and carriers of traffic conditions at and near border crossings. Possible information systems could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Television/Radio • Dynamic road signs • Websites • Toll-free phone numbers • Email and text messages • Social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is responsible for developing and communicating information to motorists and carriers? Is there a process to share information and instructions with commercial shippers and customs brokers? • Are there backup systems or alternate means of communication sharing methods to push information to motorists, commercial shippers and customs brokers should primary methods fail or be unavailable? • Do the stakeholders implementing procedures at the border that will delay traffic have a process for communicating likely delays with those that share that information with motorists and carriers? • What relationships do stakeholders need to establish with local media (radio stations, news networks, etc.) in order to ensure consistent, accurate, and timely information reaches affected motorists and carriers? • How do you effectively communicate so that motorists and carriers follow instructions?
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Resource Management:

Resource management encompasses all on-the-ground operations, including the personnel, equipment and other supplies needed to divert, stage, prioritize and inspect traffic as it approaches the border, if a situation warrants such actions. Each region should define, identify, and make available, the resources it needs in order to effectively manage the challenges presented by a border disruption.

Actions to Consider	Questions to Consider
<p>Develop the ability to halt and/or redirect the following types of traffic to triage sites/staging areas or other border crossings when such actions are deemed necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial vehicles (buses, trucks, trailers) • General purpose vehicles (cars, RVs, motorcycles) • Pedestrian/bicycle traffic • Dangerous goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stakeholders would be responsible for conducting traffic management operations and how would they know when and where to divert traffic (to staging areas, other POE and/or different modes)? • Who would have the authority and responsibility to decide when and where to divert traffic? Does this vary by State, Province/Territory? • Are separate detour routes needed for commercial and non-commercial traffic? • What are the operational challenges inherent in managing commercial/passenger vehicles already en route to the border as opposed to those scheduled to depart at a later time?
<p>Establish traffic staging areas for commercial traffic if necessary. Potential sites may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting arenas • Truck stops • Lightly-trafficked roads • Highways or other major roadways • Commercial shopping centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the considerations involved with establishing these areas (duration of site operations; use of public versus private property; site size/capacity; type(s) of good(s) to be staged/prioritized, staging of short versus long-haul carriers, etc.)? • Would it be beneficial to pre-designate staging areas and include planning considerations for these areas in current traffic management plans? • Would multiple or backup staging areas be necessary if primary sites are unavailable or incapable of accommodating traffic volumes or certain types of goods (e.g. livestock)?

<p>Establish procedures to manage marshalling fields/triage sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who would be responsible for managing entry and exit into staging areas? • Would supplies such as food and water, portable toilets, fuel, flares and signs be needed? How would supply needs differ based upon the commodities/goods being staged? • How would commercial trucks be identified and released to the border (e.g. painting or chalking tires, visible placards attached to the truck, and/or police escort from staging area to border crossing)? • Would consideration be given to truck driver service hour limits? If so, how would inspectors obtain this information and how would drivers over their limit be dealt with (e.g. turned away, told to abandon trucks, bused out for different drivers, granted exemption from government, etc.)? • Would consideration be given to trucks carrying time-sensitive dangerous goods such as perishables or medicine? • Would a prescreening area for CBP or CBSA officials to screen trucks be necessary and beneficial? What personnel and equipment would be needed to establish such a process? • How should stakeholders handle the presence of media at the staging areas? Would there be a single agency representative or liaison officer to communicate consistent and accurate information to the media?
<p>Identify and implement actions and procedures for the efficient movement of priority traffic (goods and people) across the border, should a situation warrant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once priority goods and people have been determined, who communicates this information to traffic management stakeholders? Is there a feedback mechanism built into this process? • How would trucks carrying priority goods be identified as they approach the border? Is there an online, telephone, or similar permit system available to schedule time slots for carriers to safely ship priority commercial goods across the border? Is there a credentialing process in place? Can carriers enroll in the system before or only after an event occurs? Is there a backup system? • Are waivers required to facilitate the transportation of certain goods across alternate POE? Do alternate POE have adequate infrastructure to facilitate the flow of traffic (e.g., data transmission and retrieval capabilities)? • Would trade, CBP and/or CBSA officials from the neighboring country be able to work side-by-side with their foreign counterparts to help screen for priority traffic entering their country (e.g. sending CBP agents to work on Canadian side of the border and vice versa)? If not, how will the two sides communicate effectively during this process? • How can stakeholders ensure that priority goods and people are diverted to POE that can sufficiently support increased traffic volumes?

Command and Management:

In the time after an incident, efficient command and management is necessary for effective mitigation and prompt resumption of services. The command and management component of any traffic management plan should provide a flexible, standardized incident management structure to address different types of border disruptions.

Actions to Consider	Questions to Consider
Identify and establish command roles and responsibilities for traffic management during a border disruption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are those who have the ability to manage and direct the resources required to handle different types of traffic flows during a border disruption identified and engaged in the process? • Are stakeholders on both sides of the border aware of any differences in the command structure of their foreign counterparts? • Do stakeholders on both sides of the border utilize the Incident Command System or another command and management system? • Could traffic management command roles and responsibilities change depending on the type of border disruption? If so, how would these changes be communicated to all stakeholders? • Should traffic management plans have multiple contingencies for command structure based on different border disruption scenarios? • Do traffic management stakeholders receive regular training on their roles and responsibilities? Who conducts this training? • What specific command roles/responsibilities would be involved in the establishment and management of triage/staging areas for commercial/passenger vehicles en route to the border? • Would it be beneficial and possible to have a liaison from the neighboring nation present to increase information sharing and coordination?

Ongoing Management and Maintenance:

Ongoing management and maintenance is imperative in order to ensure traffic management plans account for changes in policy, guidance, personnel and infrastructure. The routine maintenance and continuous refinement of any plan should be conducted in regular consultation with other Federal departments and agencies; State, Provincial/Territorial, tribal, and local stakeholders; and the private sector.

Actions to Consider	Questions to Consider
Conduct regular (annual, biannual, etc.) updates of the traffic management plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there potential or pending changes in policy (at the Federal, State/Provincial/Territorial, or local levels) that could affect border crossings or neighboring communities that might require updates to the plan? • Would it be beneficial for the plan to contain an updated appendix listing all stakeholders, their positions, and their contact information? • How would new personnel joining stakeholder organizations become familiar with the plan and is there a process to ensure that all are trained and briefed on the plan?
Regularly exercise traffic management plans to ensure they meet established goals and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type(s) of exercise(s) (e.g., table-top, functional, full-scale) would be most effective at assessing the viability and efficacy of plans? • What are the key considerations for conducting a traffic management exercise (funding, venue, scenario development, availability of stakeholders/actors/facilitators, involvement of multiple jurisdictions/governments, etc.)?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What objectives would a traffic management exercise seek to achieve? What stakeholders should be involved in the formation of the exercise objectives and scenario?• Is there a formal after-action process in place to incorporate lessons learned from exercises into future traffic management plans/operations (e.g. post-exercise hotwash, after-action conference, development of an improvement plan, etc.)?• Would it be beneficial for exercises to assess different traffic management scenarios?
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Additional Resources:

Real-time updates related to events affecting the normal flow of trade at the Canada-US border:

<http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/eo-ou/menu-eng.html>

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/trade/trade_outreach/bus_resumption/

Government of Canada, U.S. – Canada Border Cooperation

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/washington/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/border_frontiere.aspx?lang=eng&view=d

Top Ten Countries with which the U.S. Trades

<http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/top/dst/current/balance.html>

United States-Canada Trade and Economic Relationship: Prospects and Challenges, Congressional Research Service

<http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org/assets/crs/RL33087.pdf>

Border Barometer, February 2010

http://www.wvu.edu/bpri/files/2010_Feb_Border_Barometer.pdf

Research and Innovative Technology Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, Border Crossing Data

http://www.bts.gov/programs/international/transborder/TBDR_BC/TBDR_BC_Index.html

Northern Border Customs Brokers Association

<http://nbcba-us.org/>