2.9. U.S.-Canadian Border Crossing

2.9.1. Existing Border Crossing Facilities and Operations

The Border Crossing Study Area includes portions of I-87 and Autoroute 15 just south and north of the Champlain/Lacolle border crossing. The principal focus in those areas is the crossing facility itself, as well as the programs it utilizes to process people and goods movement across the border.

The initial phase of the Study's development and assessment process involved (1) compilation and review of available reports, including the 1998 Northern New York Border Crossing Study and the 2002 study entitled Truck Freight Crossing the Canada-U.S. Border, (2) stakeholder interviews, (3) border crossing data, (4) an Origin & Destination Survey conducted by the Study Team in August 2003, and (5) discussions with members of the Study Advisory Group. The initiatives contained within the compiled documents were then evaluated against the goals and objectives of this study and the specific needs identified as part of these Existing Conditions assessments.

The Champlain/Lacolle border crossing consists of facilities for both U.S. and Canadian Customs and Immigration. The town of Champlain is situated on Interstate 87 and connects to Rouses Point via U.S. Route 11. Interstate 87 connects to Autoroute 15 in Lacolle, Quebec. Both Interstate 87 on the U.S. side and Autoroute 15 on the Canadian side are four-lane divided limited access highways. The crossing has no bridge structures or toll collection operations. Extended queues frequently occur on the Canadian side of the border.

2.9.2. Existing and Projected Volumes – Passenger and Freight

The United States and Canada are the world’s largest trading partners, and trade is expected to grow between four and seven percent per year through the year 2015. Trade growth, combined with post-September 11 security restrictions, has spurred the governments of both countries to address operational inefficiencies at their border crossings.

The Champlain/Lacolle border crossing is the sixth busiest commercial crossing and the 11th busiest passenger crossing along the U.S./Canadian border, facilitating more than $14 billion in international trade and five percent of the international goods carried by motor carriers between the U.S. and Canada. On average, more than 15,000 commercial vehicles use the crossing weekly (bidirectional total).

The Northern New York Border Crossing Study, published in 1998, reported that the average annual growth at the Champlain/Lacolle crossing between 1985 and 1995 was about 2% for both passenger and commercial vehicles. The weighted forecast to the year 2021 is 2.2% for passenger vehicles and 5.3% for commercial vehicles. The study also found that 67% of passenger vehicle crossings were made for recreational purposes, and more than 70% of the travelers surveyed reported using the Champlain crossing only several times a year or less.

According to U.S. DOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics data, incoming truck crossings (Canada to U.S.) increased an average of 4% per year from 1994 to 2002, while incoming passenger vehicle crossings decreased an average of 3% per year. In 2001, the
Champlain/Lacolle crossing ranked 8th among the top 20 NAFTA Border Truck crossings in the U.S. It also ranked the fifth busiest U.S.-Canadian Border Crossing for personal vehicle passengers, fourth for bus passengers, and third for train passengers. In 2002, this port of entry processed 5% of the total truck traffic between the U.S. and Canada. Of the total vehicle crossings using this port in 2002, 26% were trucks.

Traffic counts taken during an Origin and Destination study conducted on the Canadian side of the border during a four-day period in August 2003 indicate that the peak hourly volume for northbound passenger vehicles on weekdays occurs between 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM, and between 2:00 and 4:00 PM on weekends. More than 500 vehicles crossed through the Canada Customs and Immigration plaza during the peak weekday hours, and nearly 1,500 vehicles crossed during the peak weekend hours. Most of the trips originated in Essex County, and the primary destination was Montreal. During the weekday surveys, nearly 70% of the vehicles crossing the border were passenger cars, and nearly 30% were trucks. The share of trucks dropped to less than six percent on the weekend.

Summary reports from the Origin & Destination study are available in Appendix 6 of this document.

The Northern New York Border Crossing Study projected that commercial vehicle demand at both U.S. and Canada Customs will exceed capacity by the year 2006. Passenger vehicle demand is forecast to exceed capacity by 2006 at Canadian Customs, and by 2021 at U.S. Customs. Short- (10 year) and long-term (25 year) conditions at the crossing are summarized in Table 2.9-1.
### Table 2.9-1
Vehicle Processing Capacity Projections at Lacolle/Champlain Crossing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Forecast</th>
<th>High Forecast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Customs –</td>
<td>Over capacity</td>
<td>Over capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passenger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Customs –</td>
<td>At capacity</td>
<td>Over capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Customs -</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Over capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passenger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Customs -</td>
<td>Over capacity</td>
<td>Over capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.9.3. Current “Port of Excellence” Plan

The Champlain/Lacolle border crossing is undergoing major improvements as part of the “Port of Excellence” project. The project is aimed at increasing the site's commercial inspection and processing capacities, and redesigning approaches and facilities at the plaza to accommodate the current and anticipated growth in commercial, bus and automobile traffic. It crosses a variety of jurisdictional boundaries and includes operations of the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, and other Federal inspection agencies.

In addition, the plaza connects to the road systems of the Province of Québec, Canada and New York State. All of these agencies have partnered to advance the “Port of Excellence” plan. NYSDOT has been leading recent efforts to secure funding to expedite the plan, with support from the General Services Administration, Congressional members, local leaders, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the other involved federal agencies.

The $107 million “Port of Excellence” project, which will be a model for other border crossings in the United States, features phased reconstruction of the entire port of entry. Some site work is being done this year and will be followed by construction of most of the facility in 2004, and a new administration facility in 2005. Congress recently authorized $42.8 million for Federal Fiscal Year 2004-2005, which will cover Phase 1 construction -- the new truck/commercial facilities.
2.9.4. FAST and NEXUS Programs – Components and Status

In December 2001, U.S. Director of Homeland Security Tom Ridge and Canadian Deputy Prime Minister John Manley signed the "Smart Border" Declaration and associated action plan to enhance the security of our shared border while facilitating the legitimate flow of people and goods. The action plan is based on the secure flow of people and goods; secure infrastructure; and information sharing and coordination between the U.S. and Canada in the enforcement of these objectives. Initiatives spawned by the Smart Border plan include the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) and NEXUS programs.

- The FAST Program
  FAST is a border crossing program for commercial carriers. The benefits of the FAST program are available to drivers, carriers, and importers who have been pre-authorized by the United States and Canada. Low risk goods being imported from the United States into Canada by a pre-authorized importer, a pre-authorized carrier, and a registered driver are processed through a dedicated lane at the border using bar code or transponder technology. Technology on both sides of the border is designed to be compatible.

Goods cleared using the FAST program remain subject to physical inspection. However, given the low-risk nature of the goods, and that the driver, carrier, and importer are known partners with the U.S. and Canadian Customs administrations who have invested in security-enhancing business practices, these goods are examined at a significantly lower rate than other imported goods. FAST, and its related program, C-TPAT (Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism), are program of the U.S. Customs Service (USCS). Partners In Protection (PIP) is the equivalent program of the Canadian Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA). The programs essentially incorporate into the trucking and shipping companies themselves some of the key essential elements of border security, including procedural and physical security systems, personnel security, related education and training, and manifest tracking and conveyance procedures.

The program's benefits include faster, more secure clearance of transborder shipments; reduced costs of compliance with customs requirements; and cooperation between the U.S. and Canadian Customs administrations. These benefits will be achieved by:

- Reducing the information required for customs clearance;
- Eliminating the need for importers to participate in the transmission of data for each transaction;
- Dedicating lanes for FAST clearances;
- Using compatible technology and electronic data protocols;
- Reducing the rate of border examinations;
- Conducting trade compliance verification away from the border to the greatest extent possible; and,
- Establishing compliance account managers who will be dedicated to building and maintaining client partnerships, and monitoring authorized clients' compliance.

FAST is already working southbound. One of the existing truck booths has been designated for FAST trucks. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Ministry of...
Transportation Québec (MTQ) are planning new signage on Autoroute 15 which will inform FAST approved truck drivers that they can leave the right lane and proceed down the designated FAST lane. This will function optimally once the new crossing facility is constructed. FAST will be fully up in both directions sometime in March.

Effort is needed on both side of the border to increase awareness of, and registration for, this program.

**The NEXUS Program**

The NEXUS program applies to passenger vehicles and allows pre-screened, low-risk travelers to be processed with little or no delay by United States and Canadian border officials. The NEXUS program allows U.S. and Canadian officials to concentrate their security efforts on potentially higher-risk travelers and goods attempting to cross the border. Individuals approved to participate in NEXUS receive an identification card to use at the border that allows them to:

- Use NEXUS-dedicated lanes in the United States and Canada; and
- Cross the border without routine customs and immigration questioning.

The U.S. Customs Service (USCS), the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (USINS), the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) are cooperating in this venture to simplify border crossings for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. Because NEXUS is a cooperative, coordinated program between the two countries, applicants need only complete a single application form.

Individuals may qualify to participate in NEXUS if they are a citizen or permanent resident of the United States or Canada, or are a non-permanent resident with a demonstrable need to use the NEXUS lanes. Ineligibility for the program would be caused by any of the following:

- Inadmissibility to the United States or Canada under applicable immigration laws;
- Provision of false or incomplete information on the NEXUS;
- Conviction of a criminal offense in any country without receiving a pardon;
- Violation of customs or immigration law; or
- Failure to meet other requirements of the NEXUS program.

To participate, an individual's application must be approved by both the United States and Canada. If an individual does not meet the requirements of the program, their application will be denied.

NEXUS is operational in both directions at the Champlain crossing. The permit costs $50 for five years, and motorists were able to apply for a permit starting in June. A processing center in Champlain was open as of November, which will speed up the issuance of NEXUS cards. The actual NEXUS lanes are expected to be open and functioning in both directions during at least peak traffic times by December 2003.

As with FAST, marketing on both sides of the border is needed to increase motorist awareness of the NEXUS program.
2.9.5. Passenger Rail Border Crossing

The existing passenger rail service in the corridor is delayed by the often-antiquated single-track alignment on which it operates, but also by the extensive delay at Customs after the existing Amtrak service (the Adirondack) passes into Canada. This operation at Cantic in Quebec can add up to one hour to the overall scheduled running time, which is presently 10 hours and 15 minutes from New York City to Montreal. These issues are being addressed in a separate Pre-Feasibility Assessment of High Speed Rail Service in the New York City – Montreal Corridor (“HSR Study”), being completed as part of the overall I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study. Both the initial draft of the HSR Study, and the equivalent study being completed by the Quebec Ministry of Transportation, propose that Customs operations for rail passenger service be handled the same way as for air service, with Customs handled at the destination station. A similar study of HSR service between Boston and Montreal also assumes the elimination of a Customs stop at the border for that service. As this issue is addressed in the HSR Study, there is no further discussion of this issue in this section.

2.9.6. Summary of Existing Border Crossing Conditions

The Champlain/Lacolle crossing serves local, regional, and national traffic. It served 1.4 million vehicle crossings in 2002. Commercial traffic comprises 26% of this traffic. According to the Northern New York Border Crossing Study, both the U.S. and Canadian facilities will be over capacity for both passengers and commercial vehicle processing by the year 2021, with many of these facilities over capacity by 2006, if current Customs and Immigration processing practices persist. The “Port of Excellence” Plan is addressing this prediction.

As was stated in the previous section, passenger rail crossing conditions are also in need of improvement. Expediting Customs procedures or conducting those activities prior to boarding passengers on trains could reduce the overall passenger rail travel time between New York and Montreal.

2.9.7. Border Crossing Improvement Concepts

The Champlain/Lacolle border crossing is currently undergoing significant improvements, and is the site of several programs aimed at expediting and securing passenger and freight movements across the border. Candidate concepts identified in the first phase of this study therefore focused on ways to capitalize on these improvements and ensure that the crossing becomes the “Port of Excellence” it is positioned to be. Key areas of need that were used as the bases for identifying an initial list of improvement projects included:

- **Ensuring Realization of Planned and On-Going Programs.** A number of significant programs and projects have already been identified either at the national and international or local level that, if fully realized, produce a substantial benefit to person and goods movement in this corridor. Ensuring that continued funding is appropriated and that required capital projects and programs are implemented is critical to the growth of the corridor as an international gateway, and to the important link between the Canadian and New York State economies.
**Enhancements to Existing Programs and Facilities.** Discussions at corridor stakeholder meetings addressing the implementation of, for example, the NEXUS program (to expedite passenger auto crossings) and the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program at the Champlain/Lacolle border crossing, indicated that substantial support is required to achieve broad acceptance of and benefits from these and similar programs. Similar discussions with a number of major shippers confirmed this. A similar effort was needed (and continues) to gain broad acceptance of the EZ Pass toll collection system despite the clear cost and time benefits for drivers.

Sometimes the enhancements for these types of programs can be TSM-type improvements, such as directional signage and preferential lanes for truck bypass program users so the program’s full benefits can be realized. However, as the image of the empty Nexus preferential lane indicates, program acceptance can be slow, while misperceptions of participation requirements may keep candidates away. Marketing of the program benefits helps to capture its potential users.

Exhibit 2.9-1 lists the candidate concepts within the Border Crossing category, and indicates the approximate location of each within the Primary and Secondary Study Areas. Brief write-ups of each concept are then provided.
Exhibit 2.9-1: Border Crossing Improvement Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Project Concept</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B-1</td>
<td>Port of Excellence Project</td>
<td>Champlain/Lacolle Border Crossing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-2</td>
<td>FAST and NEXUS Marketing</td>
<td>Corridor-Wide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Improvement Concept B-1

**Concept/Location:**
Port of Excellence Project, Champlain/Lacolle Border Crossing

**Purpose:**
Complete the “Port of Excellence” project currently underway by approving the additional budget authorization requested by the GSA.

**Problem:**
The Champlain/Lacolle border crossing is the fifth busiest US/Canadian gateway for commercial vehicle crossings. The proposed project would alleviate the current congestion and safety concerns, which sometimes lead to queues of three or more miles on the Canadian side. The current and projected volume for autos, trucks and buses that will utilize the crossing will exacerbate the problem and hinder future growth.

**Description:**
The proposed project will reduce the impact of the high volume of traffic by expanding the cargo inspection facility and increasing the number of primary commercial inspection lanes. In addition, the project will provide safe and secure parking for autos and trucks; a safe and well-defined queuing and maneuvering area for trucks; and safe parking for visitors, brokers, and federal employees.

**Strategy:**
Support approval of additional budget authorization and completion of the Port of Excellence plan.

**Benefit:**
Increased safety, security and efficiency of the Champlain/Lacolle Border Crossing.

**Status:**
Phase I underway. Scope and schedule for design and construction activities are under review. GSA seeking additional appropriation for expanded scope.
### Improvement Concept B-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept/Location:</th>
<th>Free and Secure Trade (FAST) and NEXUS Programs, Champlain/Lacolle Border Crossing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong></td>
<td>Improve motorist and commercial vehicle operator knowledge of the FAST and NEXUS programs. Increase number of program applicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem:</strong></td>
<td>Infrastructure improvements for roll-out of FAST and NEXUS are underway at the Champlain/Lacolle crossing. Publicity and enrollment efforts must keep pace to ensure that users are informed about the programs and ready to take advantage of them once rollout is complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong></td>
<td>FAST is provided in all southbound lanes, although none are specifically dedicated to it yet. Northbound, roll out is awaiting the addition of a new dedicated booth and an auxiliary lane so that trucks will not block the mainline. An aggressive marketing campaign will be implemented in anticipation of the program’s full roll out in Spring 2004. NEXUS is scheduled to begin Fall 2003. Applications continue to be processed, and an aggressive marketing campaign aimed at commuters and other frequent users of the border crossing should be implemented in Spring 2004.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy:</strong></td>
<td>Develop and implement an aggressive outreach program to trucking organizations, shipping firms, major distribution centers, and truck fleet owners within the corridor to publicize the availability of the FAST program. Conduct workshops to assist applicants with required paperwork and documentation. Follow up with applicants to make sure the program’s elements and benefits are understood, and that application material and other steps are successfully completed. Distribute NEXUS program flyers at the border crossing and at motor vehicle bureaus in communities near the border. Conduct outreach to major employers whose employees frequently conduct business cross-border. Use all available media (radio, newspapers, etc.) to make people in the corridor aware of the program and its benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefit:</strong></td>
<td>Greater interest in the FAST and NEXUS programs, and preparation of motorists for the programs’ full implementation. Ultimately, the widespread use of both programs will reduce border wait time, expedite freight inspections, and improve security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status:</strong></td>
<td>In progress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Parsons-Clough Harbour