

INFORMATION BULLETIN

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SUBJECT: *Fingerprint, retina scans considered for border crossing security*

SOURCE: *CBC News, 9/18/14*

Canadian and U.S. security officials are considering new advanced technology features, such as fingerprinting and retina scanning, to improve the border crossing between Windsor, Ont., and Detroit.

Delegates to the U.S. and Canada Border Conference in Detroit learned how security will change once the new cross-border bridge is constructed between west Windsor and Detroit, and set to open in 2020.

- **Border guards testing body cameras**
- **Canada, U.S. name panel to oversee new \$1B Detroit-Windsor bridge**
- **Security main topic at Canada-U.S. border conference**

"First of all, we'd like to be able to have the infrastructure to share data across the bridge more quickly," said Mark Borkowski, who speaks for U.S. Customs and Border Protection. "So there's some talk, in fact we've had discussions with the Michigan Department of Transportation - do we wire the bridge much the way you wire new houses now?"

Officials spoke of eliminating paperwork, and using mobile apps, self-serving booths and new fingerprinting technology and retina scans as some of the options.

The goal is to make things easier on commercial truck drivers, said Rick Comerford of the Canada Border Services Agency.

"We talked about a green lane concept, so a rolling truck kind of concept," said Comerford. "It's not available today, but it will allow trusted traders to essentially bypass the current booths and proceed straight through the border."

One of the border-crossing systems already in use is the Nexus card. An extensive background check is needed for anyone who gets a card, which can get them through customs and across the border in about 20 seconds, compared to an average of about 45 to 75 seconds without a card.

Bill Anderson, the research chair in cross border transportation at the University of Windsor, was at the conference. He explains the Nexus cards use radio frequency identification (RFID), which is now being used in U.S. passports

"When you got through the Nexus lane, you just hold up the card, there's a chip in it, all of the information that's in that chip is picked up by a wireless technology. which then refers that information directly to the person that's in the booth and into the computer system of CBP [Customs and Border Protection] or CBSA [Canada Border Services Agency]."

Anderson said RFID technology could be used more broadly, in things items as passports in Canada as well.

The CBSA charges a \$50 processing fee to get a Nexus card, which is valid for five years.

Governments have to clear technology 1st

Anderson said the issue isn't developing the right technology, but getting government agencies to approve and adopt some of what is already in use.

"A lot of these things are feasible because we're really talking about using technologies that are already available ... the challenge is really integrating those technologies into government activities."

He said the idea of a fully self-serve booth will still take time to develop and implement, and would probably be installed in an airport setting first.

"You'd be using biometric technology, so it would be iris scanning technology. At the University of Windsor, we're developing new fingerprinting technology; those types of things would be easier to use in these types of kiosks, would probably be remotely controlled. There would be cameras on them," he explains.

Anderson said a new bridge from Windsor to Detroit could be used to build a highly advanced border crossing, by using technology currently being developed by auto industries, which would allow the transfer of information between vehicles and intersections.

A lot of the same technology can be used to transfer information between the traveller and the shipper and government agencies in a quick way, he said.

"One of the things they're talking a lot about at this conference with respect to security, they don't want to be doing random checks. They want to be doing targeted checks because they're a lot more efficient," said Anderson.

"You have a much better chance of discovering somebody doing something illegal if you have some information upfront and you're not just choosing people at random, but that implies that information about people is going to be exchanged with these agencies."

Opposition to high-tech crossings

But not all travellers approve of new technology.

When it comes to fingerprint scans, Windsor resident Josh Lehoux has a problem.

"I probably would be against it, yeah," said Lehoux. "I don't see a reason why you need my fingerprint. I don't know if the technology [is] perfected yet either.

"The passport system, is there something wrong with the system now? I don't think so. It seems to be working out fine."

Technology costs and bridge construction

The new technology would come at a price, and while Canadian officials seemed more keen on the initiative, U.S. officials have made it clear they don't have a budget for it.

The total cost of the new bridge would be about \$4 billion Cdn, including work on freeway interchanges, customs plazas in both countries and infrastructure work.

Canada has agreed to pay for construction of the bridge and will recoup its costs through border tolls.

The U.S. has yet to commit to paying for a \$250-million U.S. customs plaza, the final piece of the new international Windsor-Detroit crossing.

About 30 per cent of trade between Canada and the U.S. flowed through Windsor-Detroit in 2013, accounting for \$20 billion in goods hauled by 2.4 million trucks, said Canadian Transport Minister, Lisa Raitt, during the bridge project announcement in Windsor earlier this year.