Niagara Border Crossings Could See Less Bus Congestion with Soon to be Introduced Online Bus Arrival Reservation System

About six years ago, OMCA met with US and Canadian border crossing officials responsible for the three Niagara crossings and proposed a web-based coach arrival scheduling system. OMCA put forward the idea as a way for US CBP and CBSA to more effectively schedule staff to meet bus traffic volumes, and to distribute bus traffic more evenly across the three border crossings. Our proposal was viewed by them as "interesting" and having "some potential", but nothing happened …until now. Recently, US CBP and CBSA got together, along with the two bridge authorities, to develop a system like the one we proposed. We met with them two weeks ago at the Peace Bridge and viewed a demo of how the new system might look and work – and it is impressive.

The system will allow bus companies to use an online data portal to submit the date, time, and the number and citizenship of passengers (detailed passenger manifests will *not* be required). Bus companies and border officials will be able to view (for each of the three border crossings) the number of buses scheduled for each time slot. This can help bus companies select a border crossing and time having fewer buses. It will also help CBSA and US CBP staff each crossing according to volumes. There will be no fee to use the system and while it will not be mandatory, its use by bus companies will be encouraged. There are indications from border officials that they'll try to give some priority treatment to those buses that arrive at (or close to) their reserved time slot over those buses that arrive without a reservation. We are attending another meeting at the end of February and will provide updates on this initiative in future *OMCA Report*.