

BorderPlanner.com: Bus arrival scheduling system at Niagara border crossings designed to reduce border wait times for buses

A year since BorderPlanner.com was first introduced as a pilot program involving a number of OMCA bus operator members, it is now fully implemented and available to any bus company that wants to use it. BorderPlanner.com is a joint effort of the two bridge authorities, the US CBP and Canada's CBSA, designed to reduce bus wait times by more evenly distributing bus traffic amongst the three bridges and time of day.

The system allows bus companies to use an online portal to submit the scheduled arrival date, crossing location [Peace Bridge, Rainbow Bridge or Queenston-Lewiston Bridge], time of day, and the number and citizenship of passengers. Detailed passenger manifests are not required to participate in *BorderPlanner.com*. Bus companies and border officials are 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 with open time slots and fewer buses. It also helps CBSA and US CBP to adjust staffing at each crossing according to expected bus traffic volumes. There is no fee to use the system and while it's voluntary, its use by bus companies is encouraged.

Bus operators are encouraged to select a crossing and time of day based on the number of bus arrivals scheduled in the system for that time. While it must be noted that participation may not always result in expedited processing, and it is not a "reservation" system per se, border authorities have indicated when possible, priority may be given to buses that arrive at or near their scheduled time/crossing, over a bus that arrives about the same time but hasn't used *BorderPanner.com*.

When bookings are made, the bus operator receives an email receipt that should be given to the driver. The receipt doubles as a windshield placard to indicate to bridge and border crossing officials the bus is participating in the *BorderPlanner.com* program.

It's easy for bus operators to register. Go to www.borderplanner.com and follow the instructions.