



Pacific NorthWest Economic Region

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Jurisdictions from the United States, Canada and Mexico Look to Washington State and British Columbia for Guidance on Implementing Enhanced Driver's Licenses

*Webinar Organized by Pacific NorthWest Economic Region
Attracts Driver's License Officials from Nearly 20 Jurisdictions*

Seattle, WA (November 29, 2007) -- Washington state and the province of British Columbia have been working with each other, local stakeholders and with their respective federal governments for the past eighteen months to develop a feasible alternative to using a passport to cross the border.

With the US government set to bring in new requirements on acceptable identity documents at the border, jurisdictions from across the United States, Canada and Mexico wanted to learn more about the work of B.C. and Washington to develop their enhanced driver's license programs, anticipated public outreach campaigns, and how best to coordinate efforts with the US and Canadian federal governments.

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) organized a webinar on Wednesday, November 28 in order to help other jurisdictions learn more about how to set up their own EDL program.

"We had a great turnout today and are thrilled by the level of interest from our counterparts around the country and throughout the western hemisphere. Our enhanced license, the first of its kind in the country, is a feasible alternative to using a passport to cross the border and we are delighted to share our knowledge with others who may be contemplating the same direction," said Liz Luce, Director of the Department of Licensing.

"The partnership with Washington state has been tremendous. We are pleased that other provinces are looking into it as well and encourage them to work closely with the Canadian government to implement their own Enhanced Driver's License programs," said Hon. John van Dongen, B.C. Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations.

"DHS is aggressively pursuing the development of Enhanced Driver's Licenses and encouraging states to explore this option – which serves both our security and facilitation goals," said U.S. Department of Homeland Security

WHTI Program Director Colleen Manaher. “States and provinces that develop an Enhanced Driver’s License will be providing their residents, who voluntarily apply and qualify, with a document that is acceptable for use at U.S. land and sea ports of entry. We commend Washington, British Columbia and PNWER, for their commitment to working with us to find creative solutions, and in sharing their best practices with others.”

The idea of developing driver’s licenses that would meet the new US document requirements was first raised at a joint summit between Washington Governor Chris Gregoire and British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell in June 2006. In July of that year, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region hosted an Annual Summit in Edmonton, Alberta, which featured a roundtable discussion with US Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and his Canadian counterpart, Hon. Stockwell Day, Minister for Public Safety. At that meeting, Secretary Chertoff invited Washington and British Columbia to come up with a pilot project and indicated that he would consider it.

Less than a year later, in March 2007, Governor Gregoire signed a memorandum of understanding with Secretary Chertoff in Seattle allowing Washington state to proceed with the pilot project.

“This is another example of how the Northwest is providing regional solutions to global challenges. British Columbia and Washington state are providing significant leadership on this issue and have developed an innovative solution. With the Olympics a little more than two years away, we need to address these issues today,” said Matt Morrison, PNWER’s Executive Director.

Representatives from Alberta, Arizona, Baja California (Mexico), Idaho, Manitoba, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, New Brunswick, New York, North Dakota, Northwest Territories, Ohio, Quebec, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont and Yukon joined officials from British Columbia, Washington State and the Department of Homeland Security on the webinar.

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a statutory, public/private partnership composed of legislators, governments, and businesses in the Northwest states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington and the Western Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and the Yukon Territory. PNWER promotes greater regional cooperation by governments and business to enhance the region's global competitiveness, while striving to maintain or improve its environment.

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