

# Commercial Customs Operations Advisory Committee (COAC)

## Secure Trade Lanes Subcommittee: Remote and Autonomous Cargo Processing Working Group Government Issue Paper

March 2021



U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

Office of Field Operations, Cargo and Conveyance Security  
Remote and Autonomous Cargo Processing Working Group  
March 2021

**Action Required:**

- Informational Only

**Background:**

- The COAC Remote and Autonomous Cargo Processing Working Group (RACPWG) was established with the following goals:
- Establish a clear vision of autonomous conveyance in each environment and speculate how customs operations should be built to afford efficiencies both to traders and to the U.S. government by addressing the following:
  - Define key categories of autonomous technologies for each environment
  - Identify which phases of the entry and conveyance process are most/least adaptable to automation
  - Define which Trade and CBP processes need to adapt in order to facilitate implementation of autonomous conveyance technologies
  - Provide a set of recommendations to CBP regarding the costs, benefits, and risks associated with implementation of autonomous technologies as it pertains to entry and conveyance processes

**Issue:**

- The trade is looking to explore how advanced technology can be utilized within cargo processing applications.
- Remote processing applications have been researched by CBP and conceptually included in port of the future designs.
- The working group was established to identify ways to assist CBP in identifying and assessing existing and future technology to facilitative cargo clearance.

**Background:**

- The working group ultimately decided that the original goals were too broad in scope, and that a single mode of transportation should be focused on for review and assessment.
- The RACPWG has reviewed ongoing efforts with Kansas City Southern and CBP at the Laredo Port of Entry.
- In July the working group identified numerous benefits resulting from this ongoing cooperation and made the following recommendations.
  - COAC recommends that CBP establish a multi-tiered FAST program/process that allows for FAST eligible drivers to take advantage of the FAST infrastructure when driving for a C-TPAT approved carrier. Through the tiered approach, using a FAST card and a FAST manifest, the driver will be able to take advantage of the FAST lanes, automating a portion of the data and thereby expediting the cargo release process and avoiding longer wait times associated with non-FAST freight.
  - COAC recommends CBP continue efforts to enhance existing Decal & Transponder Online Procurement System (DTOPS) and the new Gen-2 RFID transponders and

infrastructure which supports Non-Invasive Inspection (NII), FAST manifest data and additional efficiencies in remote and autonomous cargo processing.

- COAC recommends CBP support expanding the use of vetted International Crews crossing land borders on the rail. Such International Crews eliminate the need to switch crews at midbridge at the border allowing for autonomous movement of goods, increasing security, saving time and therefore increasing capacity. This crew would need to be allowed to turn around at the US rail yard, inside the port, within a limited distance (20 miles) from the land border. Successful Pilot Programs at the port of Laredo should be expanded to other ports.
- COAC recommends CBP support the expansion of image technology for trains crossing land borders, e.g. Non-intrusive Image (NII) technology, and leveraging partnerships through the Donation Acceptance Program (DAP). This technology has proved to reduce time by remote and autonomous processing of cargo.
- COAC recommends CBP continue to look to the future by supporting additional bridge expansions that allow for autonomous cargo processing, whether rail or truck, at land borders. E.g. #1 expands the rail bridge at the port of Laredo to allow North and South bound international rail traffic. Retaining this rail connection along the secure rail corridor between the rail yards is essential to international rail operations in and around Laredo and Nuevo Laredo. E.g. #1 Additional bridge being constructed near Detroit to relieve congestion.

### **Next Steps:**

- The group has continued to work on identifying unique ways in which the trade can collaborate with CBP on modernizing the processing of cargo in all modes.
- Maritime and Air modernization efforts have been researched and the COAC has identified numerous ongoing efforts CBP is undertaking to eliminate paper processes within the entry and clearance of maritime cargo.
- The working group has also reviewed current autonomous air delivery services being researched and developed by trade partners.
- The group has brought in representatives from the trade to discuss current domestic efforts to utilize autonomous trucks to move freight.
- Although all of these areas provide opportunities for CBP and trade to collaborate and improve processes for the entry and release of cargo, the working group is not going to put forth any recommendations at this time.

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