

**Commercial Customs Operations Advisory Committee
Government Issue Paper
Secure Trade Lanes Subcommittee
Remote and Autonomous Cargo Processing Working
Group**

December 2022



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

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**Office of Field Operations, Cargo and Conveyance Security
Remote and Autonomous Cargo Processing Working Group
December 2022**

Action Required: Informational

Background:

- The Commercial Customs Operations Advisory Committee (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 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) processes need to adapt in order to facilitate implementation of autonomous conveyance technologies; and
 - 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.
- 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 (POE).
- 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 Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program/process that allows for FAST-eligible drivers to take advantage of the FAST infrastructure when driving for a Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (CTPAT)-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 radio frequency identification (RFID) transponders and infrastructure which supports Non-Intrusive 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 mid-bridge 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 U.S. 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., NII technology) and leverage partnerships through the Donation Acceptance Program (DAP). This technology has been shown to save 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.
- The RACPWG has completed the first draft of a white paper.
- Members of the RACPWG conducted visits to the POE of Brownsville and Laredo to observe drive-through NII, command center processing, and Unified Cargo Processing operations.

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.

Current Status:

- This working group was placed on hiatus at the end of fiscal year 2022 as a result of industry not having the technology readiness level needed to pursue an autonomous cargo delivery as well as the potential legal and regulatory hurdles. The working group can be restarted if one of the stakeholders intends to pursue an autonomous cargo operation.

Next Steps:

- Continue to enhance and refine the white paper as new information becomes available.

- Continue working on the previous recommendations.

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