



**BORDER POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

Highlighting Cross-Border Collaboration in Cascadia for FIFA 2026

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INTRODUCTION

As the largest global sporting event in the world, the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup will span 16 cities across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Across these three countries, the Cascadia region (specifically British Columbia and Washington state) is the only hosting area where matches are staged on both sides of an international land border. With Vancouver hosting seven matches and Seattle hosting six, the geographic proximity of the game dates in June and July will heighten demand for cross-border travel in the region, presenting unique pressures due to both increased volumes and the international make-up of travelers.

The objective of this brief is to assess the border policy implications of FIFA World Cup 2026 for the BC-Washington corridor, summarize progress since the last [Border Policy Brief](#) in 2024 that emphasized the challenges and opportunities that came with this event, and highlight key ongoing initiatives designed to support border agencies, travelers, and the broader visitor economy.

BACKGROUND

FIFA World Cup 2026 is expected to attract immense global interest. FIFA reports that over 4.5 million fans globally registered interest during the first ticket lottery, with tickets purchased from more than 212 countries and territories worldwide. Vancouver and Seattle each expect to see up to 900,000 visitors² and 750,000 visitors³ respectively over the course of the matches and related festivities. International ticket sales data underscores the inherently cross-border nature of this demand as well. To date, Americans are the number one international ticket purchasers for the games in Vancouver, while Canadians are the top international purchasers for the Seattle games. And both venues have high volumes of ticket sales to five of the same countries: Australia, Switzerland, Qatar, Germany, and the UK, highlighting the potential for cross-border fan movement. Additionally, at the time of this publication, over 11,000 tickets were purchased by BC residents for Seattle matches, while nearly 4,000 Washington residents bought tickets for Vancouver games. When combined with non-ticketed fans and regular travelers, these figures suggest a sizable bump in cross-border travel during the 5-weeks that the Games are taking place in the region.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Since the publication of the 2024 Border Policy Brief, [The 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup Games: Implications for cross-border travel in Cascadia](#)⁴, meaningful progress has been made in recognizing and planning for the cross-border dimensions of the World Cup. Notably, border agencies in both countries have established regular coordination meetings, and organizations such as the Cascadia Innovation Corridor (CIC), the International Mobility and Trade Corridor program (IMTC), Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) and the Future Borders Coalition (FBC) have convened bi-weekly virtual meetings, in addition to workshops, bringing together border officials, tourism organizations, and transportation providers. These workshops held in Vancouver, Seattle, and Bellingham over the past two years have emphasized three shared priorities: (1) improving public communication before travelers reach the border, (2) separating low-risk travelers from high-risk or less-known travelers, and (3) maximizing the use of digital tools to reduce processing pressure.

With less focus on large-scale infrastructure expansion, in favor of improved passenger processing, several ongoing efforts are worth spotlighting.

Know Before You Go (KBYG) Tool

The Know Before You Go initiative is a key contributor to general border preparedness for visitors. Developed through collaboration between numerous stakeholders, the tool is a generative AI-powered, web-based portal that provides travelers with clear, government sourced information on admissibility requirements for Canada, the United States, and Mexico across land, air, and marine modes, and is available in 27 languages.

The development of the [KBYG tool](#)⁵ is grounded in direct feedback and experience from local stakeholders. Border agencies consistently identify poorly prepared travelers (for example, those lacking proper documentation or misunderstanding visa and authorization rules) as a major driver of bottlenecks and secondary inspections. This risk is amplified during FIFA, given the diversity of travelers and the differing entry requirements between Canada and the US, such as ESTA requirements for US entry versus Canada's ETA rules, which vary by mode of travel. By enabling travelers to confirm requirements in advance and in their preferred language, the KBYG tool aims to reduce admissibility errors, minimize secondary referrals, and improve overall flow at high-volume crossings.

Trusted Traveler Enrollment Blitz

Trusted traveler programs, particularly NEXUS, are some of the most effective tools for expediting low risk

cross-border movement. A NEXUS blitz at King County Airport was held in February⁶ and successfully enrolled 1,000 individuals, with local stakeholders encouraging additional blitzes to be executed ahead of FIFA. NEXUS lanes significantly reduce processing times for frequent and pre-vetted travelers but remain underutilized relative to their potential impact. Both Canadian and US governments put resources into the blitz, evidence of continued successful collaboration between the two countries.

Advance Manifest and Land Border Declarations

Another effort is the expansion of advance declarations for land border travel, particularly for Canadian and U.S. citizens. Advance declarations are already available for air travel through Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) apps. On April 20, 2026, CBP launched an expansion⁷ of their Mobile Passport Control (MPC) app to four land border pedestrian crossings in the Cascadia region. MPC will allow eligible pedestrian travelers to submit passport and travel information in advance of arrival, expediting their time at the border.⁸

A pilot program at various BC-Washington crossings could allow vehicle travelers to use MPC in dedicated "advance declaration" lanes, which would further align land border processing with modern air travel practices, allowing officers to focus their time on higher risk (i.e., less known) travelers. With sufficient participation, such a system could materially improve wait times and security during FIFA, while also freeing up officer time.⁹

In addition to individual travelers, advanced manifests for motor coach travel can also help to facilitate border processing by allowing officers to vet travelers before they arrive at the border. It is estimated that up to 50 buses – a mix of scheduled services and charters - will cross Blaine on some match days, which further underscores the value of incorporating advanced information in the land border environment to avoid delays. Both border agencies are encouraging charter bus operators to set up processes for submitting advanced passenger manifests. Bus operators can submit manifests using CBP Link for US entry, and can work directly with CBSA for Canadian Entry.

Border Agency Staffing

CBSA has already identified June 8 to July 9 as the FIFA surge window, and subsequently confirmed plans to bring in additional officers with dynamic regional deployment. Additionally, further efforts to reduce border wait times are being made. On the US Side, CBP plan to bring as many as 128 officers on temporary duty assignments to support their operations for a 30-day period before and throughout the event.

LAND-BORDER TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

While uncertainty remains¹⁰ as to how much cross-border travel will increase during the Games, there will undoubtedly be a heightened demand for cross-border transportation. Outside of private vehicles and other charters, scheduled cross-border transportation between the host cities is limited. This includes one-way volumes of roughly 1,300 passengers by plane, 800 by bus, and less than 500 by train. Cross-border train service is already reaching capacity, with trains completely sold out on 4 of the game days, and 75% of seats sold on the Seattle to Vancouver route for the entire 5-week span of the games.

One response to the need for more cross-border transportation options is a new partnership developed between Whatcom Transportation Authority and Bellair Charters, fostered by the regional cross-border collaboration efforts mentioned in this Brief. [The FIFA '26 Sports Shuttle](#)¹¹ will operate from Everett to BC place, with stops in Burlington and Bellingham, for all 7 games in Vancouver.

CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION AND LONGER-TERM GOALS

Planning for the FIFA World Cup Games has highlighted the value of cross-border collaboration in the Cascadia Region. The continued coordination between CBSA and CBP, regional organizations such as the Cascadia Innovation Corridor¹², Pacific NorthWest Economic Region¹³ and the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program¹⁴, along with binational and global organizations like the Future Borders Coalition¹⁵ and InterVISTAS Consulting¹⁶ has produced regular workshops and platforms for information sharing. These efforts, which sought to advance innovative approaches to meeting increased travel volumes at the border during the Games, demonstrate the importance of multi-level governance and integrating input from federal agencies, local stakeholders, and the private sector on both sides of the border.

While the efforts mentioned in this brief are driven by the Games, they also present opportunities for institutionalizing cooperative frameworks into the future. The various planning workshops, and development of tools such as the [Know Before You Go](#), as well as promotion of pilot projects and Trusted Traveler enrollment opportunities provide a structure for ongoing cross-border cooperation and collaboration into the future.

Once the Games come to an end, there is a unique opportunity for stakeholders involved in the planning process to leverage the momentum of these collaborations to conduct post-game analyses. ***The various planning efforts and workshops that lead up to the Game have set the groundwork for institutionalizing cooperative frameworks going forward. This established framework should be used to facilitate a “lessons learned” from the Games in order to develop a better understanding of what worked well and what could be improved, and to incorporate those lessons into advancing traveler mobility into the future.***

CONCLUSION

The 2026 FIFA World Cup presents a strategic opportunity for enhancing cross-border efficiency and security in Cascadia, whilst also posing a challenge for local stakeholders as the BC-Washington corridor will experience higher volumes and traveler diversity. While infrastructure constraints limit traditional responses, the region has made tangible progress since 2024 by focusing on traveler preparedness, trusted traveler expansion, and prearrival data submission. Border processes are being highlighted as a key part of the overall visitor experience, and stakeholders emphasize the importance of preparedness ahead of the event in order to avoid border delays and barriers. Initiatives such as the Know Before You Go tool, a NEXUS enrollment blitz, and land border advance declarations address the need for efficiency and security in the midst of the world's largest sporting event. These measures could enhance the visitor experience for travelers on both sides of the border and also pave the way for more durable cross-border coordination and long-term improvements to the border long after the 2026 FIFA Games have come and gone.

Endnotes

1. Rosaline Leung, a BPRI Research Fellow, works with InterVISTAS Consulting Inc. InterVISTAS specializes in the transportation and tourism industries. Their consulting services include economic analysis, governance issues, regulatory and legislative advocacy, travel and tourism strategy, security and border facilitation, international transportation policy, and a wide range of related services.
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3. Franz, Jesse (2023, August, 08). Seattle City Council approves 2026 FIFA World Cup plan. Seattle City Council Blog. <https://council.seattle.gov/2023/08/08/seattle-city-council-to-vote-on-2026-fifa-world-cup-plan/>
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5. Know Before You Go: Requirements for Visiting North America (United States, Canada, and Mexico). Future Borders Coalition. <https://fbc-static-portal.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/index.html>
6. US Customs and Border Protection (2026, January, 29). NEXUS special joint CBP/CBSA enrollment event at King County International Airport (Boeing Field) <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/local-media-release/nexus-special-joint-cbp/cbsa-enrollment-event-king-county>
7. The MPC mobile app is available to U.S. citizens, U.S. lawful permanent residents, Canadian B1/B2 citizen visitors, and returning Visa Waiver Program travelers with an approved [Electronic System for Travel Authorization](#) (ESTA). Travelers can use their mobile devices to submit passport and travel information in advance, expediting processing upon arrival.
8. US Customs and Border Protection (2026, April 20). CBP launches Mobile Passport Control at four land border pedestrian crossings in Washington state. <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/local-media-release/cbp-launches-mobile-passport-control-four-land-border-pedestrian>
9. Utilizing a separate lane solely for travelers who have submitted an advanced declaration also runs the risk of removing more processing capacity from the larger system, if there is not sufficient participation.
10. Almond, Elliot (2026, April 27). Lack of FIFA ticket information frustrates local planners. Cascadia Daily News. <https://www.cascadiadaily.com/2026/apr/27/lack-of-fifa-ticket-information-frustrates-local-planners/>
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12. Cascadia Innovation Corridor (CIC). <https://connectcascadia.com/>
13. Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER). <https://www.pnwer.org/>
14. International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC). <https://wcog.org/imtc>
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