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Canada & US: Changing Trends in Cross-Border Travel and Relations

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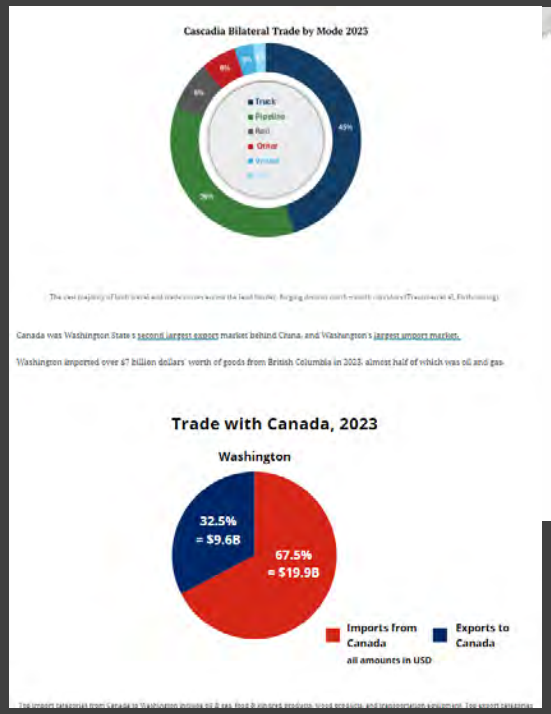

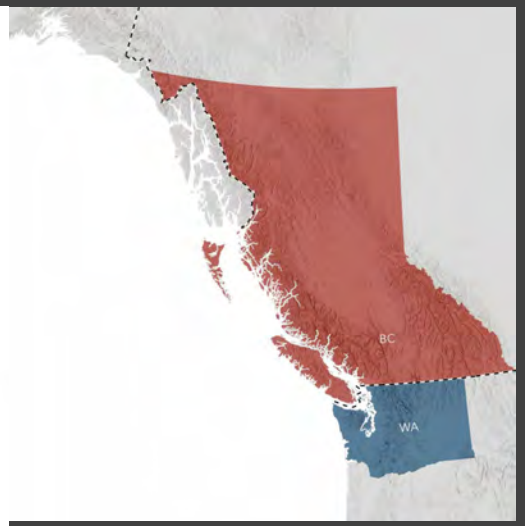

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Highlighting Cross-Border Collaboration in Cascadia for FIFA 2026

By: Rosaline Leung[1], Laurie Trautman & Jennifer Bettis

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 visitors[2] and 750,000 visitors[3] 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.

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FUTURE BORDERS COALITION

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Pacific NorthWest Economic Region

IMTC

The International Mobility & Trade Corridor Program

Ecosystem of cross-border organizations/initiatives

Cascadia Innovation Corridor

Our cross-border relationships influence us in many ways

Travel & Tourism

Trade & Supply Chains

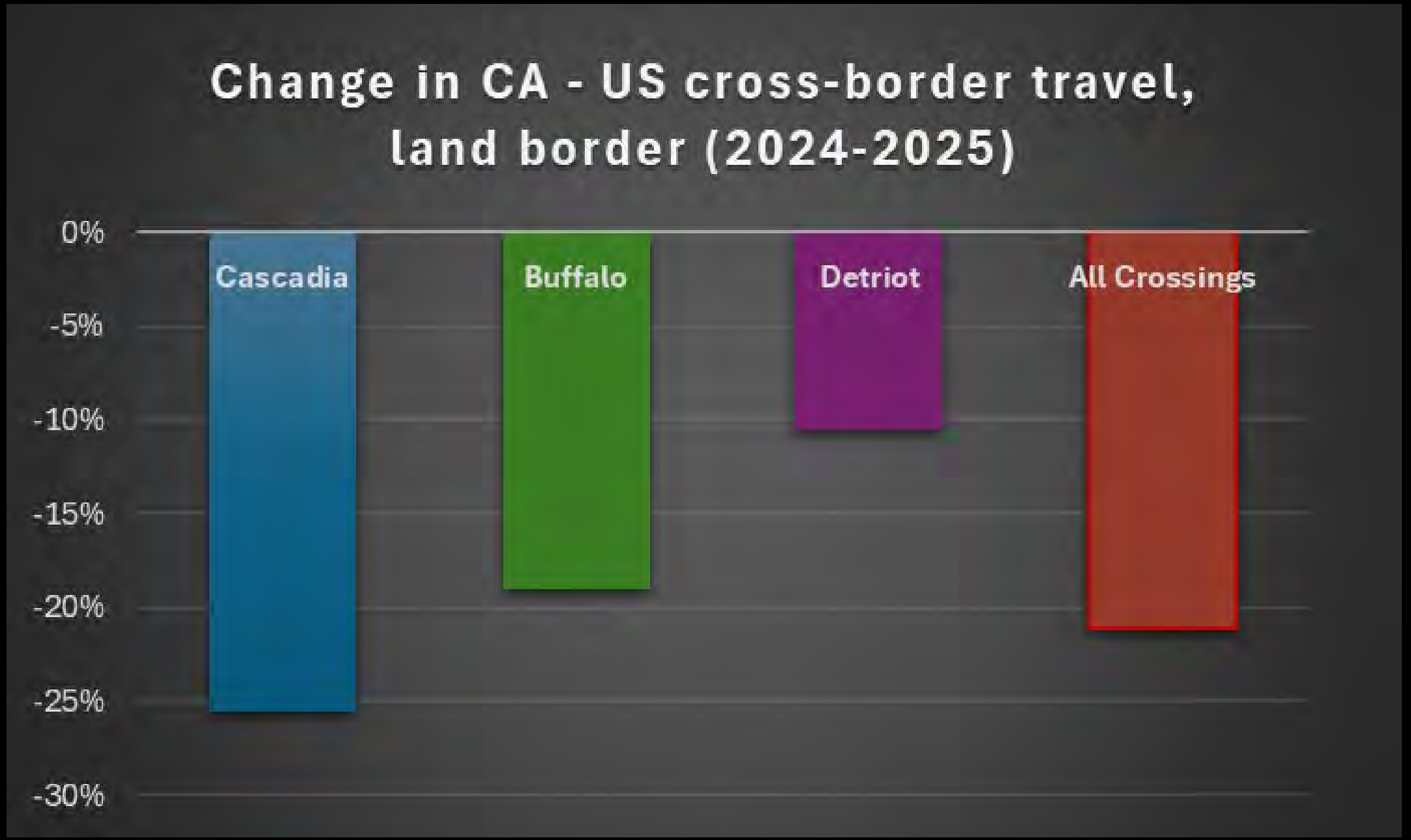
Innovation

Shared natural environment

Disaster response

Families, Friends, Neighbors

What are some key trends in cross-border travel?


Change in CA - US cross-border travel, land border (2024-2025)
0%
-5%
-10%
-15%
-20%
-25%
-30%
Cascadia
Buffalo
Detriot
All Crossings

Trip purpose of Canadians, Whatcom County

(Passenger Vehicle Survey, summer results)

Primary Purpose	2018	2025	Change
Recreation/Vacation	28%	44%	+16%
Shopping	22%	11%	-11%
Gas	20%	2%	-18%
Mail	12%	8%	-4%
Family	8%	18%	+10%
Business/Work	2%	4%	+2%
Airport	1%	2%	+1%

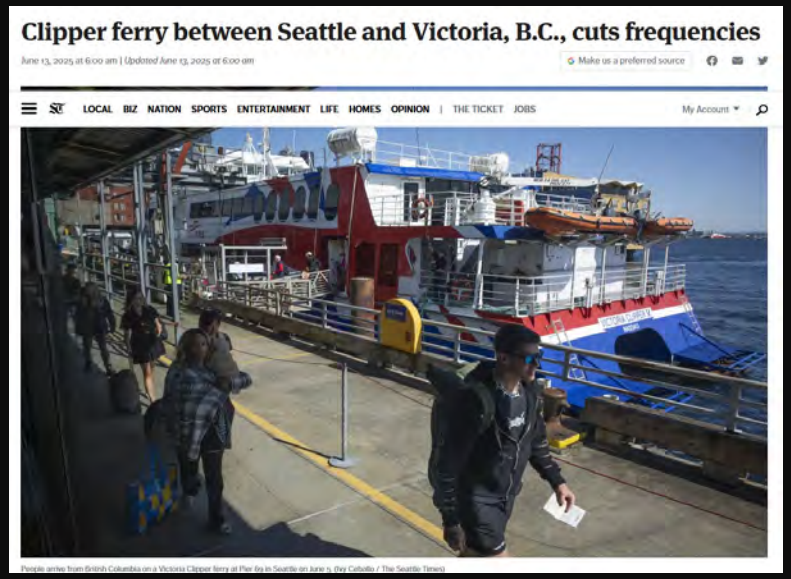
Canadian Visitor Spending in Washington
(rough estimate)

	2019	2024	2025
Canadian visits (land border)	8.6 million	6.5 million	4 million
Estimated Spending (same day + overnight)	$3.8 billion	$3.1 billion	$2.0 billion

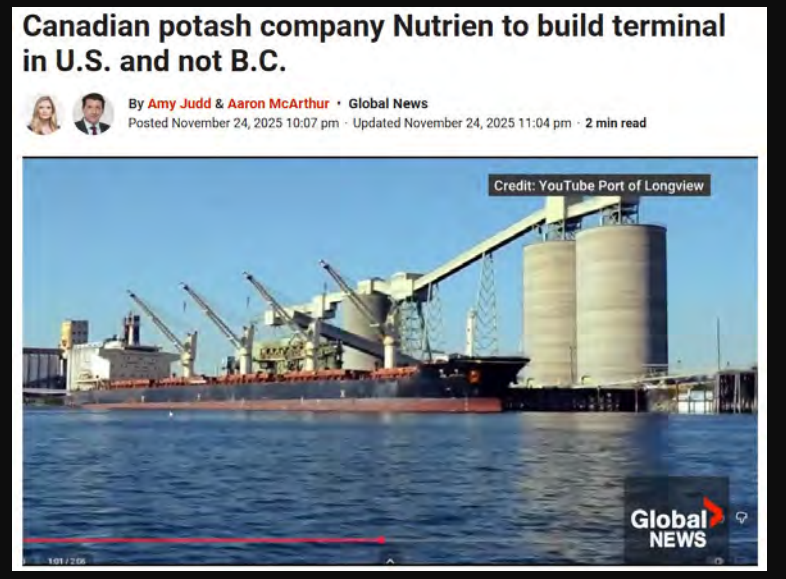
What are the implications for transportation in Washington?

Cross-Border Transportation (longer term trends?)

Shifting Travel Demand



Trade Relations / Freight flows



Cross-Border Transportation Impacts

B.C. adopts permanent daylight saving time, influenced by 'recent actions from the U.S.'

by KOMO News Staff | Mon, March 2, 2026 at 1:58 PM
Updated Mon, March 2, 2026 at 8:51 PM

FILE - A custodian inspects a clock face before changing the time on the 100-year-old clock atop the Clay County Courthouse March 8, 2014, in Clay Center, Kan. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel, File)

What are the takeaways?

- Steep drop in cross-border travel in 2025 is stabilizing, but unlikely to reverse in near term (new normal)
- Disrupted trade networks may re-orient to other markets (or may prove to be sticky)
- Border communities and border states are disproportionately impacted by a combination of rising costs, uncertainty, and a rupture with Canada
- Many bi-national working relationships still strong, but under strain
    - Resilient subnational/regional networks of collaboration (planning for 2026 FIFA Games)

**The loss of trust with our allies and neighbors impacts our quality of life in ways that can't be measured and will be difficult to repair*

Recommendations and Opportunities

- The better we understand the WA – Canada relationship, the better we can engage and respond (*we don't know what we don't know!*)

- Cross-border collaboration doesn't happen by accident, requires relationships that need to be supported, elevated, and integrated into broader state strategies
  - Transportation planning
  - Economic resiliency
  - Disaster response
  - Environmental health

- Focus on issues that bring benefits to both sides of the border

Thank You

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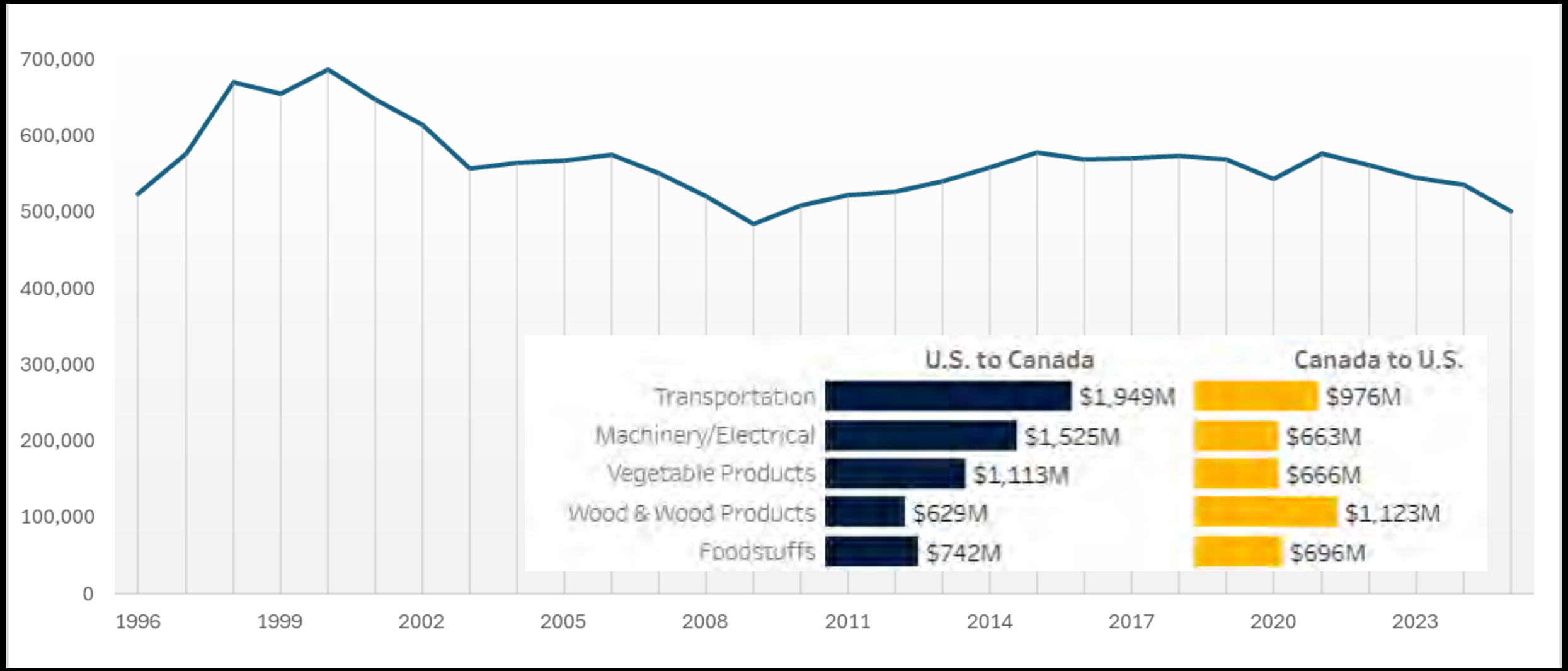
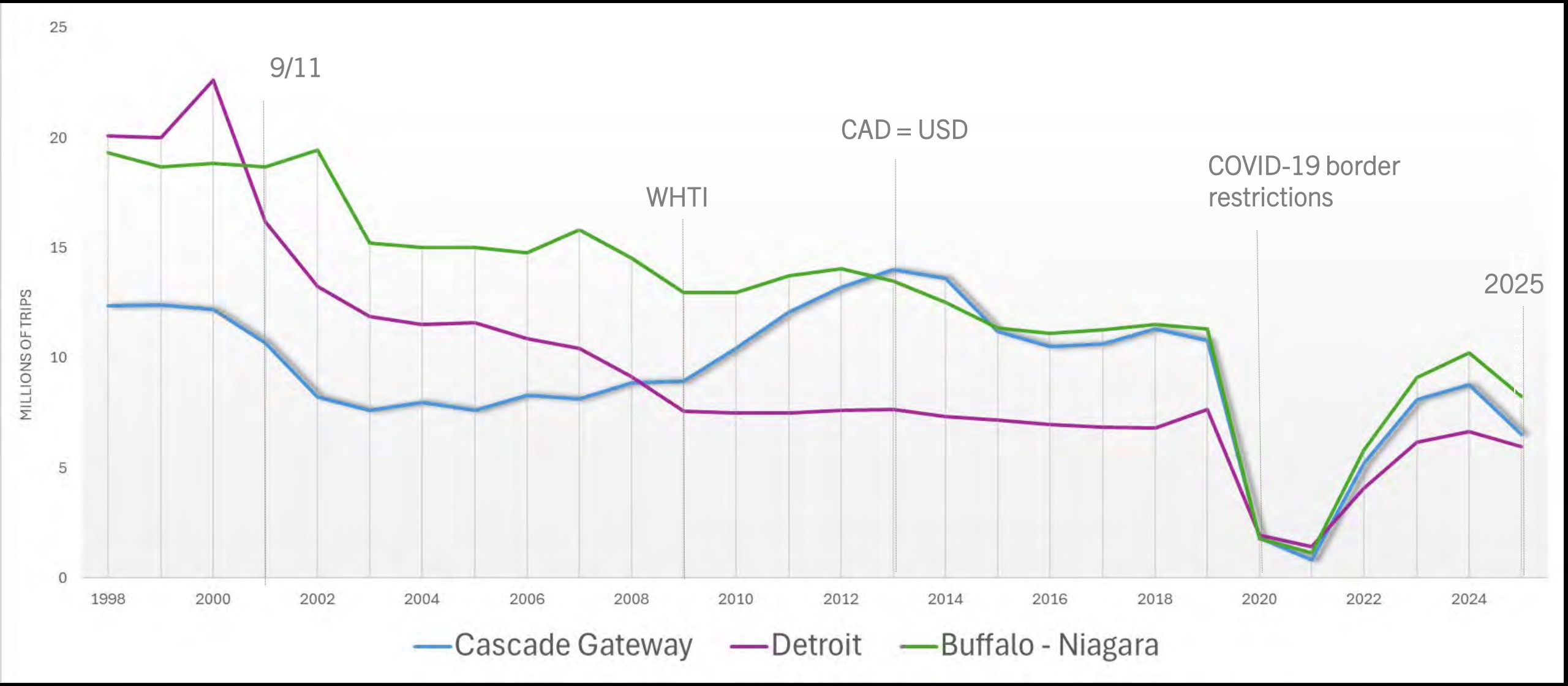
Number of Trucks, Cascade Gateway (1996 - 2025)



REGIONS RESPOND DIFFERENTLY TO BORDER 'SHOCKS'