

Border Trade Advisory Committee Report

Michael W. Behrens, P.E., Executive Director
Texas Department of Transportation

November 16, 2006



Submitted in Compliance with SB 183 of the 79th Regular Session

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Trade Transportation Corridors	4
Coordination with Mexico	5
Safety and Security Measures	7
Economic Benefits of International Trade	10
Border Trade Advisory Committee Members	11

Introduction

SB 183 calls for the establishment of the Border Trade Advisory Committee (BTAC), with a charge to define and develop a strategy and make recommendations to the Texas Transportation Commission (commission) and Governor for addressing the highest priority border trade transportation challenges. In determining actions to be taken on the recommendations, the commission is to consider the importance of trade with Mexico, potential sources of infrastructure funding at border ports, and the value of trade activity in the department's districts adjacent to the Texas-Mexico border.

The BTAC met on July 19, 2006 and September 8, 2006, and during the meetings the following goals were developed:

Primary Goal: Develop short-term recommendations that can be addressed in the next legislative session.

Secondary Goal: Develop long-term recommendations to address at the federal level and with Mexico.

Ten principles were developed by the committee members as the initial items that should be part of the recommendations (not in priority order):

1. Promote ample and expandable transportation trade corridors
2. Effectively coordinate with Mexico to ensure through trade corridors
3. Promote efficiencies at the border
4. Demonstrate statewide, national, and international benefits of trade
5. Optimize operations
6. Develop ports of entry for use of new technologies
7. Support improvements to the Presidential Permit process
8. Look for policies to facilitate trade at both state and federal levels
9. Promote cooperation and understanding of policies with Mexico
10. Leverage safety and security measures to enhance trade efficiency

The 10 principles were consolidated into four categories:

- Trade Transportation Corridors
- Coordination with Mexico
- Safety and Security Measures
- Economic Benefits of International Trade

The proposed strategies, implementation actions, measures of success, and the responsible party(ies) for each category are presented in the following sections.

A. Trade Transportation Corridors

Promote the development of ample and expandable trade transportation corridors.

1. Strategy: Support the development of the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) and other major identified trade corridors to assist the expansion of Texas' international trade. Efficient multimodal trade corridors in Texas with connections to the Mexican transportation system will foster Texas trade with Mexico and other regions of the world.

Implementation Action 1.1: Develop consensus and support for the TTC – Short Term.

Measure 1.1: Local delegations demonstrate broad support through testimony at Texas Transportation Commission meetings/hearings.

Responsible Parties 1.1: Local.

Implementation Action 1.2: Develop consensus and support for all major trade corridors – Long Term.

Measure 1.2: Local delegations demonstrate broad support for future Texas transportation projects.

Responsible Parties 1.2: Local.

Implementation Action 1.3: Develop local support for public-private-partnerships to fund the TTC – Short Term.

Measure 1.3: Sufficient financial support to accelerate TTC development.

Responsible Parties 1.3: Local, state.

2. Strategy: Develop policies to facilitate trade at both state and federal levels. Trade policies supported by adequate transportation infrastructure will stimulate the flow of goods in the state and improve existing commercial corridors.

Implementation Action 2.1: Develop common measures of efficiency to reflect trade throughput at all trade corridors to serve as a basis for establishing funding priorities – Long Term.

Measure 2.1: Completion and adoption of measures by state and federal entities.

Responsible Parties 2.1: Local, state, federal.

B. Coordination with Mexico

Develop coordination mechanisms to foster trade between Texas and Mexico.

3. **Strategy:** Coordinate effectively with Mexico to ensure the planning and development of through trade corridors. Formal and informal coordination efforts with Mexican federal and state government agencies are important to ensure the development of efficient U.S.-Mexico trade corridors.

Implementation Action 3.1: Enhance bi-state multimodal corridor planning efforts through coordinated workshops – Short Term.

Measure 3.1: Number of workshops held for high-level bi-state multimodal corridor planning.

Responsible Parties 3.1: State, Mexico.

Implementation Action 3.2: Develop prioritized bi-national local improvement plans – Short Term.

Measure 3.2: Number of prioritized bi-national local improvement plans developed.

Responsible Parties 3.2: Local, Mexico.

4. **Strategy:** Promote more efficient international border crossings. Existing international border crossing procedures and infrastructure should be examined on a continuing basis to identify efficiencies that can be gained by coordinating with Mexican stakeholders. Future international border crossing plans should be developed in close coordination with Mexican and U.S. stakeholders to promote the efficient use of the latest technologies, procedures and infrastructure on both sides of the border.

Implementation Action 4.1: Harmonize private and public sector activities and schedules to achieve maximum effective use of available international border crossing infrastructure – Long Term.

Measure 4.1: Reduced average delay at all international border crossings.

Responsible Parties 4.1: Federal.

5. **Strategy:** Promote cooperation with and understanding of U.S. policies. Constant changes in U.S. security and safety policies impact the international border crossing process and the overall trade between Texas and Mexico. It is important to support cooperation efforts with Mexican government agencies and the trade community so that new rules are understood and their impact on international trade is minimized.

Implementation Action 5.1: Organize and promote attendance to local workshops for presentations by federal and state regulatory bodies, to include extensive question and answer sessions with private sector and trade communities – Short Term.

Measure 5.1: Number of workshops and attendance.

Responsible Parties 5.1: Federal.

C. Safety and Security Measures

Leverage safety and security measures to enhance trade efficiencies.

6. **Strategy:** Promote efficiencies at international border crossings. By evaluating, recommending and implementing various procedures, efficiencies can be gained throughout international border crossings. Some of the efforts that have been discussed include eliminating the duplication of the vehicle safety inspections, combining security facilities, implementing interoperable technology, modifying hours of operation, increasing staffing levels and applying demand management techniques like off-peak incentives – value pricing.

Implementation Action 6.1: Expand the use of the FAST (Free and Secure Trade) program, and the proposed express lane at the Department of Public Safety (DPS) inspection stations – Short Term.

Measure 6.1: Number of local stakeholders willing to participate in and promote FAST and DPS programs.

Responsible Parties 6.1: Local.

Implementation Action 6.2: Evaluate the design of international border crossings and local access points to ensure efficient use of FAST lanes – Short Term.

Measure 6.2: Crossing time for FAST trucks compared to non-FAST trucks.

Responsible Parties 6.2: Federal

Implementation Action 6.3: Evaluate operations at existing international border crossings to ensure they are performing at optimum efficiencies – Long Term.

Measure 6.3: Commercial vehicle crossing time.

Responsible Parties 6.3: Federal

7. **Strategy:** Develop international border crossings that take advantage of the latest technologies and procedures. New procedures and technologies significantly impact the way international border crossing inspections are carried out and therefore the infrastructure needs at international border crossings. Planned international border crossings should be designed with enough flexibility to benefit from the latest technology and expedite the design and construction process, as well as to make it easy to change in the future when new technologies are implemented.

Implementation Action 7.1: Work with the General Services Administration and other U.S. federal agencies to develop flexible user-oriented configurations and practices for new or rehabilitated international border crossings – Long Term.

Measure 7.1: Conduct joint workshops with federal officials intended to achieve a modified approach to international border crossing design.

Responsible Parties 7.1: Federal.

8. **Strategy:** Review Presidential Permit policy to facilitate international bridge construction. Current Presidential Permit procedures to construct or modify international bridges are lengthy and difficult to obtain. A streamlined procedure will smooth the progress of any required modification to take advantage of new technologies or processes.

Implementation Action 8.1: Develop and coordinate with bi-national federal officials an approach to facilitate improvements to existing international border crossings – Long Term.

Measure 8.1: Revised procedures for national consideration.

Responsible Parties 8.1: Local.

Implementation Action 8.2: Coordinate permitting process for new international border crossings – Long Term.

Measure 8.2: Time required obtaining permits.

Responsible Parties 8.2: Local.

9. **Strategy:** Provide a balance between required inspections and efficient trade flow.

Implementation Action 9.1: Ensure proper staffing, resource management and appropriations for new international border crossings or expansion of existing international border crossings that will allow for adequate inspections yet ensure efficient trade flow – Long Term.

Measure 9.1: Commercial vehicle crossing time and security level.

Responsible Parties 9.1: State, federal.

D. Economic Benefits of International Trade

Demonstrate the economic benefits of international trade at the national, state and local levels.

10. **Strategy:** Identify national, statewide and international benefits of trade. Increased land commercial trade not only benefits the local port of entry where the transaction takes place but also has a ripple effect that benefits the state and the nation as a whole. The Alameda Corridor Project in California is an example of how a trade corridor improvement can benefit not only the region but the whole nation.

Implementation Action 10.1: Review and implement previous recommendations to quantify local, regional and national benefits of improved trade at the Texas-Mexico border – Short Term.

Measure 10.1: Identify which actions must occur at the state or federal level to provide trade benefits.

Responsible Parties 10.1: State.

Implementation Action 10.2: Perform economic impact analysis of trade on local, state and national levels – Short Term.

Measure 10.2: Complete economic impact analysis of trade.

Responsible Parties 10.2: State.

Implementation Action 10.3: Establish an advocacy program led by the four U.S. border governors to promote the benefits of trade efficiencies at the state, national and international level – Short Term.

Measure 10.3: Success of advocacy program in Washington, D.C.

Responsible Parties 10.3: State.

Border Trade Advisory Committee Members

Presiding Officer – Buddy Garcia, Border Commerce Coordinator, Deputy Secretary of State

Terms expiring August 31, 2007

- José Galván – President & Chief Operating Officer, Brownsville & Matamoros Bridge Company (B & M Bridge)
- Carlos Marin – Acting Commissioner, U.S. Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (Lake Falcon Dam Crossing, Lake Amistad Dam Crossing, Fort Hancock-El Porvenir Bridge, Fabens-Caseta Bridge, Bridge of the Americas)
- George Ramón – Bridge Director, City of McAllen (McAllen-Hidalgo International Bridge)
- Jesse Medina – Bridge Director, City of Pharr (Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge on the Rise)
- Michael W. Behrens, P.E. – Executive Director, Texas Department of Transportation (Presidio Bridge)
- Sam Sparks – President, B & P Bridge Company of Weslaco (Progreso International Bridge)
- Sam Vale – President, Starr-Camargo Bridge Company (Rio Grande City-Camargo Bridge)
- Pete Sepulveda, Jr. – Director, International Bridge System, Cameron County (Veterans International Bridge at Los Tomates, Free Trade Bridge at Los Indios, Gateway International Bridge)
- Ramon Mendoza, Jr. – Toll Collection Superintendent, City of El Paso (Ysleta-Zaragoza Bridge, Good Neighbor Bridge, Paso del Norte Bridge)
- Rosalva Guerra, Zapata County Judge Elect

Terms expiring August 31, 2008

- Mayor Eddie Treviño, City of Brownsville, Policy Board Chair, Brownsville Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Mayor John Cook, City of El Paso, Policy Board Chair, El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Mayor Joe Hernandez, City of San Benito, Policy Board Chair, Harlingen-San Benito Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Mayor Leopoldo Palacios, City of Pharr, Policy Board Chair, Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Mayor Raul Salinas, City of Laredo, Policy Board Chair, Laredo Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Commissioner Mike Bradford, Midland County, Policy Board Chair, Midland Odessa Transportation Organization
- Dr. Lance Eliot Brouters, Director, Ph.D. in International Business Program, The University of Texas at El Paso

- Roman “Dino” Esparza, Texas Southmost College Board of Trustees, The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College
- J. Michael Patrick, Ph.D., Regent Professor, Texas Center for the Study of Western Hemispheric Trade, Texas International University
- Mayor Efrain Valdez, City of Del Rio

Terms expiring August 31, 2009

- David Alex, Chair, Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority
- Dennis Bureson, Chair, Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority
- Rafael M. Aldrete, Ph.D., El Paso Program Manager/Research Scientist, Center for International Intelligent Transportation Research, Texas Transportation Institute, Texas A & M University System, El Paso
- Mayor Chad Foster, City of Eagle Pass
- Robert Harrison, Deputy Director, College of Engineering, Center for Transportation Research, The University of Texas at Austin
- Judy Hawley, Commissioner, Port of Corpus Christi
- Dr. Raul Rodriguez, Distinguished Professor, Benson Chair in Banking and Finance, The University of the Incarnate Word
- William R. Stockton, Associate Director for Engineering, Texas Transportation Institute, Texas A & M University System, College Station
- Bill Summers, President/CEO, Rio Grande Valley Partnership