

El Paso/Santa Teresa – Chihuahua Border Master Plan



Appendix D

El Paso Regional Ports of Entry Operations Plan Recommendations

El Paso Regional Ports of Entry Operations Plan: Evaluation of Recommendations

In June 2011, the El Paso Regional Ports of Entry Operations Plan was commissioned by TxDOT and conducted by Cambridge Systematics, Inc. The objectives of the study were to:

- Review and assess operations at all existing bridges and crossings from Santa Teresa, New Mexico, to Tornillo/Guadalupe in the El Paso, Texas, region.
- Identify operational improvement strategies, such as using technology applications to reduce border inspection and processing times, charging higher tolls or increasing staff levels at peak traffic hours, or restricting some bridges to commercial traffic only.
- Estimate the transportation, economic, and environmental impacts and benefits of potential operational improvement strategies.
- Develop a plan to help the region finance and implement operational, infrastructure, and institutional recommendations.

The study concluded with six recommendations:

1. Extend commercial hours of operation at the Bridge of the Americas and Santa Teresa/Jerónimo POE to 20 hours per day.
2. Work with the Texas and New Mexico congressional delegations and CBP leadership and staff to add inspection personnel.
3. Work with the Texas congressional delegation, Texas Department of Public Safety, and other stakeholders to combine/co-locate safety inspections.
4. Implement a Border Traveler and Cargo Information System to provide wait time and queue length information.
5. Reconfigure the southbound lane approach to the Bridge of the Americas to separate cars and trucks.
6. Implement system improvements at the Ysleta-Zaragoza International Bridge to enhance commercial operations.

As stated in the study, these recommendations would not resolve all performance issues at the crossings. The recommendations have, however, motivated regional stakeholders in the United States and Mexico to take action and develop a strategy to prioritize current and future projects.

As part of the scope of work for the development of the El Paso/Santa Teresa–Chihuahua Border Master Plan, an evaluation of the recommendations of the El Paso Regional Ports of Entry Operations Plan was required. The evaluation was performed by meeting with the lead agencies identified in the El Paso Regional Ports of Entry

Operations Plan to determine support for the recommendations, gather available data and information, and identify the respective agencies willing to support the inclusion of the respective recommendations in the Border Master Plan. This Appendix summarizes the results of these meetings.

The first three recommendations require further action, and recommendations 4, 5, and 6 have become projects that are either currently being implemented by TxDOT or have been included as planned projects in this Border Master Plan.

Recommendation 1: Extend Commercial Hours of Operation at the Bridge of the Americas and Santa Teresa/Jerónimo POE to 20 Hours per Day

The City of El Paso and CBP indicated that this recommendation is tied to increasing CBP staff. CBP does not foresee an extension of hours of operation at the Bridge of the Americas and/or Santa Teresa. Another factor when considering the extension of commercial hours at the Bridge of the Americas is the concerns expressed from adjacent neighborhoods about trucks traversing the neighborhoods. The City of El Paso has thus restricted commercial truck traffic on certain neighborhood streets, and police are enforcing these restrictions with citations issued to violators. The City of El Paso is working with TxDOT and CBP to restrict weaving and the use of residential streets during certain peak hours Monday through Friday.

Recommendation 2: Work with the Texas and New Mexico Congressional Delegations and CBP Leadership and Staff to Add Inspection Personnel

Recommendation 2 requires action from the Federal Government. The Federal Government has stated that no funding is currently available. Federal lobbyists for the City of El Paso are currently lobbying for more CBP staff. In addition, the City of El Paso has offered to pay for additional CBP staff from revenues raised by increasing toll rates at city-owned bridges. Local stakeholders support legislation that will allow public-private partnership financing to pay for additional CBP officers and infrastructure.

Recommendation 3: Work with the Texas Congressional Delegation, Texas Department of Public Safety, and Other Stakeholders to Combine/Co-locate Safety Inspections

Recommendation 3 has been added to the City of El Paso's Federal and State legislative agenda.

Recommendation 4: Implement a Border Traveler and Cargo Information System to Provide Wait Time and Queue Length Information

Recommendation 4 has been included in this Border Master Plan as a project entitled Install Traffic Management Technology for POEs. Traffic management technology to measure real-time wait and crossing times, such as radio frequency identification (RFID) and Bluetooth, is currently being piloted by TTI at the Bridge of the Americas (RFID is installed, and data are being reviewed) and Ysleta-Zaragoza International Bridge. This pilot project is funded by FHWA. The City of El Paso and TTI plan to implement a similar Bluetooth pilot program at the Good Neighbor and Paso del Norte International Bridges. The El Paso County Secure Border Trade Project is equipping 30 trucks and trailers with technology to enable real-time monitoring of cross-border cargo traffic, and ongoing monitoring of trucks started in early 2012.

Recommendation 5: Reconfigure Southbound Lane Approach to the Bridge of the Americas to Separate Cars and Trucks

Recommendation 5 has translated into a project being implemented by TxDOT. The City of El Paso through the MPO Transportation Policy Board estimated the cost for the project at approximately \$2 million. Proposition 12 funding has been allocated for this project. The City of El Paso has completed street improvements to restrict commercial traffic from entering residential neighborhoods.

Recommendation 6: Implement System Improvements at the Ysleta-Zaragoza International Bridge to Enhance Commercial Operations

- A left-turn lane for southbound trucks is being implemented by TxDOT through striping. The striping of this lane has not been included in the Border Master Plan, but part of this recommendation—adding inspection capacity for commercial vehicles—has been included as a planned project in this Border Master Plan.