

Chapter 6. Study Summary and Recommendations

The El Paso/Santa Teresa–Chihuahua Border Master Plan was the fifth binational effort along the U.S.-Mexico border. The format approach was similar to that used for the California–Baja California Border Master Plan, which was completed in September 2008 and is currently being updated; the Laredo–Coahuila/Nuevo León/Tamaulipas Border Master Plan, which was completed in 2011; and the Lower Rio Grande Valley–Tamaulipas Border Master Plan, which is currently being finalized.

The development of border master plans is important to identify and prioritize planned projects on the U.S.-Mexico border. The border master plan process:

- Identifies binational POE and multimodal project priorities.
- Secures commitment from stakeholders to implement priority projects.
- Ensures continued dialog among agencies moving forward.

This chapter summarizes the study effort. This chapter also includes a number of observations regarding development of successful border master plans and recommendations to maintain and enhance dialog among Federal, State, regional, and local stakeholder agencies in Texas and Mexico to ensure continued coordination on current and future POE and supporting transportation infrastructure needs and projects.

6.1 Stakeholder Participation

BNAC guided development of the El Paso/Santa Teresa–Chihuahua Border Master Plan. BNAC is composed of 18 voting members and 26 non-voting members. The voting members provided overall direction, established clear metrics for the development of the Border Master Plan, reviewed and endorsed the criteria for prioritizing planned projects, established working groups to work with the study team in securing the relevant data and information, endorsed the final Border Master Plan, and are expected to incorporate the findings and priorities of the Border Master Plan in their agencies' planning and programming processes.

The non-voting members assisted in development of the public and stakeholder outreach activities; reviewed documentation produced by the study team; developed the draft ranking framework for prioritizing projects that was subsequently reviewed, modified, and endorsed by the BNAC voting members; and made recommendations to the BNAC voting members. Six working groups were established to work with the study team in securing the necessary data and information for the development of the Border Master Plan.

For border master plans to be successful, stakeholder participation in and commitment to the development of these plans are critical. The study team secured this for the Border Master Plan by:

- Hosting regular meetings and maintaining contact with stakeholders and committee members.
- Using technology and an innovative approach to provide each BNAC member with an equal voice in developing the ranking framework that was used to prioritize projects.

The study team hosted four BNAC meetings (see Appendix B) and maintained contact through regular e-mail and telephone communications with the working groups and BNAC members. To accommodate BNAC members who are not bilingual, simultaneous translation was available at all meetings.

Since the prioritization of planned projects can be sensitive and contentious, it was critical to design a stakeholder involvement process that was inclusive and ensured the participation of all BNAC members. Furthermore, it was critical to the endorsement of the Border Master Plan and ensuring commitment to the implementation of the Border Master Plan's priorities that the process gave BNAC members an equal voice. Each BNAC member needed an equal voice in developing the draft ranking framework, and each BNAC voting member needed an equal voice in endorsing the final ranking framework that was used to prioritize projects.

Classroom Performance System technology (I>Clickers) enabled anonymous voting and facilitated reaching consensus on the various elements of the ranking framework—categories, category weights, criteria, and criterion weights. The process worked as follows:

- BNAC members were provided with an I>Clicker that allowed them to indicate/vote on an item (e.g., the importance of a specific criterion in prioritizing a project on a scale of A to E, where A was extremely important and E was extremely unimportant).
- Votes were anonymous, but the study team could track how many members voted. Once the votes were cast, the results were displayed, and the study team facilitated a discussion about the voting results.
- BNAC members were subsequently asked to vote again, and the process continued until there was substantial agreement (two-thirds of the respondents agreed) or until the voting results did not change from one round to the next.

This approach allowed all BNAC members to participate in development of the ranking framework. The same process was followed for endorsement of the categories,

category weights, criteria, criterion weights, and scoring metric by BNAC voting members.

6.2 Technical Data/Information

Fairly detailed technical data and information are required in development of border master plans to describe the current and future demand for existing border infrastructure and to enable the prioritization of planned future projects. Given adequate technical data and information to prioritize projects, border master plans provide a detailed inventory of the current infrastructure serving cross-border movements and planned project priorities in a study area. High-priority projects included in a binational border master plan provide a powerful argument when competing for transportation funding at the Federal and State levels, as well as for private and local funds.

Similar to the California–Baja California Border Master Plan and the Laredo–Coahuila/Nuevo León/Tamaulipas Border Master Plan, the El Paso/Santa Teresa–Chihuahua Border Master Plan includes a detailed inventory of all transportation facilities serving POEs in the study area. Also similar to past border master planning efforts, a list of planned POE and transportation infrastructure projects was compiled from various planning documents. The list of planned projects was shared with the POE, Transportation Infrastructure, and Rail Infrastructure Working Groups. The study team repeatedly requested that the working group members provide the study team with data necessary to allow prioritization of planned projects. Ultimately, most of the data and information provided to the study team for the planned U.S. road and interchange, transit, and POE projects were submitted by TxDOT, NMDOT, the El Paso MPO, SunMetro, Presidio County, and the City of El Paso. On the Mexican side, Promotora de la Industria Chihuahuense, a State of Chihuahua agency, played a critical role in coordinating and obtaining the data required by the study team for the planned Mexican road and interchange and POE projects. In addition, the Municipality of Juárez provided maps with the geographic location of projects and project information. Planned rail project information was obtained from the New Mexico Border Authority, BNSF, and Ferromex.

The more data and information that were provided for a planned project, the greater the opportunity for the planned project to receive a score—and the higher the likelihood that the planned project would be ranked higher than a similar project for which limited data were provided.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Institutionalizing the Dialog

Border master plans should be updated when there are major changes in the content of the border master plans. For example, if a number of priority projects have been completed or if a number of planned projects have emerged since the border master plan was developed, the plan will need updating. This keeps the contents and inventories current and allows the border master plan to continue to represent the region's vision and goals. The timing of the updates may differ from region to region.

It is recommended that BNAC convene every year to determine the need for updates. Information on all completed priority projects and any planned projects that have emerged since the completion of the previous Border Master Plan should be presented. This presentation will allow BNAC to make an informed decision about the need to update the planned project inventory and technical data of the Border Master Plan. Similarly, BNAC will be able to determine the need for a comprehensive update to the plan. A comprehensive update would involve revisiting the planning horizons (short, medium, and long term), the geographic boundaries of the study area (Focused Study Area and Area of Influence), the socio-economic data, cross-border travel demand changes, and the ranking framework that was used to prioritize projects. Finally, it is recommended that a representative of BNAC or TxDOT's International Relations Office make regular informative presentations to the U.S./Mexico Joint Working Committee to discuss the need to update the existing Border Master Plan (as determined by BNAC) or to report on any in-progress border master plan updates.

6.3.2 Development of Future Border Master Plans

The study team offers the following observations and recommendations for consideration in development of future border master plans or updates of this Border Master Plan:

- Three of the four U.S. States on the southern border have overseen the development of border master plans. To remain a viable planning tool, these plans must reflect each different region's needs, interests, and priorities. If the ultimate goal is to establish U.S.-Mexico project priorities, it is recommended that regions follow a similar—although not necessarily the same—approach in the development of all border master plans. A consistent approach would allow projects across the entire border to be compared.
- Border master plans currently provide detailed inventories of planned project priorities in a Focused Study Area. Two enhancements to the scope of work for updating the border master plans should be considered: identify funding

opportunities for high-priority projects in the Focused Study Area, and develop technical tools to evaluate the potential regional impact of investments. Specifically, the feasibility of developing technical tools (models) to determine how investment in a specific project would impact demand (e.g., diverting traffic to other crossings) and therefore the need or priority of other planned projects should be determined. The implementation of some of the identified high-priority projects could potentially reduce the need or delay the need for implementing some of the other high-priority projects. As currently developed, border master plans do not quantify or model the demand impact of an investment in specific projects on other crossings or transportation infrastructure in the region.

- Ensure participation by actively reaching out to stakeholders. Keep stakeholders engaged in the development of border master plans, ensure a process where every stakeholder has an equal voice in the selection of the criteria that will be used to prioritize projects, and make all reports and information disseminated available in both English and Spanish. Ultimately, continued support for development of border master plans will only prevail if results can be demonstrated—by the funding and implementation of high-priority projects identified by the border master plan.