



# Border Trade Advisory Committee

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Summary of Committee Minutes

July 9, 2020



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## SUMMARY OF MINUTES

### Border Trade Advisory Committee

### Texas Department of Transportation

Austin, TX

July 9, 2020

**BTAC Members/Designees:** Ruth Hughs, Texas Secretary of State, Chair, Rafael Aldrete, Commissioner Julian Alvarez III, Luis Bazan, Eduardo Calvo, Eduardo Campirano, Andrew Canon, David Coronado, Megan Shea (on behalf of Paul Cristina), John Esparza, Josue Garcia, Jake Giesbrecht, Marga Lopez, Mayor Bruno Lozano, Juan Olaguibel (on behalf of the Anzalduas-Hidalgo port of entry) Tommy Taylor, Sam Vale, Jon Barela, Commissioner Vincent Perez, Stan Meador, Cynthia Garza Reyes, Hector Garza (on behalf of Dante Galeazzi).

**Others Present Included:** Commissioner Alvin New, Commissioner Laura Ryan, Steve Decker, Manuel Farias, Guillermo Gonzalez, Consul General Pablo Marentes, Jorge Salcido, Ernesto Gonzalez, Erika Garcia, Anna Alvarez, Tim Juarez, Caroline Mays, Marc Williams, Brian Burk, Eduardo Hagert, Francisco Almanza, Donald Ludlow, Alejandro Solis, Chris Williges, Keith Bucklew, Sergio Contreras, Gail Lewis, Giacomo Yaquinto, David Zapata.

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Welcome and Introductions**
- III. Approval of Minutes from June 17, 2020 meeting (action item)**

Secretary Hughs called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. and welcomed the Border Trade Advisory Committee (BTAC) members and special guests. On motion of Sam



Vale, seconded by Andrew Canon, members approved the minutes of the June 17, 2020 meeting.

#### **IV. Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan**

Caroline Mays (TxDOT) thanked BTAC members and other stakeholders for their participation in developing the Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan (Border Master Plan). Ms. Mays provided a recap of BTAC's June 2020 meeting and a summary of the Border Master Plan.

Donald Ludlow (HDR) presented an overview of Chapter 5 of the Border Master Plan. Mr. Ludlow explained that Chapter 5 summarizes the current and future issues and needs of the binational and multimodal transportation system, and it helps identify future strategies and solutions. Mr. Ludlow noted that one of the key messages in Chapter 5 is that the continued growth of population, trade, and travel demand has outpaced investments in the border region. Mr. Ludlow outlined certain high-level findings, including that the highest system performance needs related to congestion, safety, and infrastructure asset conditions tend to be concentrated within the last mile of the border. Mr. Ludlow discussed certain cross-cutting themes in Chapter 5, namely binational and multimodal coordination, collaboration, and cooperation; the integration of new technologies; data collection, harmonization, and sharing; and system monitoring.

Mr. Ludlow outlined other portions of Chapter 5. He noted that Chapter 5 identifies existing gaps in funding and the need to secure additional, consistent funding sources to cover these gaps. Mr. Ludlow further highlighted the importance of a data-driven prioritization process to allocate funding. Mr. Ludlow explained that Chapter 5 recognizes the need for a comprehensive binational framework for systemic processes, procedures, and investments to respond to unforeseen crises. Chapter 5 also presents information about rail systems connecting Texas and Mexico and identifies problems faced by such systems. Mr. Ludlow described that Chapter 5 assesses border safety and security, including by mapping out the locations of bicycle, pedestrian, and commercial and passenger vehicle incidents along the border.



BTAC members provided comments on Chapter 5. Sam Vale stressed the need for improved communications with funding agencies. Eduardo Campirano commented on integrating rail crossings into the plan. Eduardo Calvo recommended that BTAC members be given additional time to analyze the information and provide specific feedback to improve the plan.

Alejandro Solis (HDR) presented information on Chapter 8. This chapter identifies and evaluates strategies to address current and future needs of the border. Mr. Solis explained that the strategies are organized to assist stakeholders in linking those strategies to current and future needs, broken down by policies, programs, and projects. Chapter 8 also evaluates the strategies using criteria that reflects the Border Master Plan's goals. Mr. Solis described some of Chapter 8's key messages, including that there are multiple solutions to address important needs and the strategies for border crossings and corridors will be evaluated using similar but separate approaches.

BTAC members offered comments regarding Chapter 8. Mr. Calvo suggested that TxDOT and HDR meet one-on-one with each region to create greater alignment among stakeholders in the plan's quantification of needs and identification of project priorities. Mr. Vale commented that the Border Master Plan can help serve as a tool to obtain funding for certain projects. Mr. Solis asked members to provide feedback about how projects should be evaluated and prioritized.

Chris Williges (HDR) discussed Chapter 6 of the Border Master Plan. Mr. Williges explained that Chapter 6 presents future forecasts for the Texas-Mexico border region. Mr. Williges noted that HDR had altered some of the assumptions in its alternate forecast based on feedback from the previous BTAC meeting. Mr. Williges presented slides on forecasts for the movement of goods to 2050, including slides on the total trade by value and tonnage through the Texas-Mexico border; future movement of goods through the border; future truck movement through the border; future rail movement of goods; air cargo forecasts; and pipeline and maritime tonnage forecasts.

Mr. Williges also provided data on forecasts for the movement of people. For example, Mr. Williges presented slides on the future movement of people across the border in personally owned vehicles; bicycle and pedestrian movements; and passenger bus



movements. Additionally, Mr. Williges informed members of the forecasted increases in passenger and commercial wait times, as well as forecasts of vehicle miles traveled. Mr. Williges explained HDR's methodology in forecasting wait times.

BTAC members offered comments regarding Chapter 6. Mr. Vale remarked on the factors that will play a role in increasing the movement of people across the border. David Coronado expressed concerns over the accuracy of forecasting to 2050, but Ms. Mays stressed the importance of including a long-term forecast in the Border Master Plan notwithstanding the variable factors. Mr. Vale described the different ways that Customs and Border Protection and other stakeholders measure wait times. Members agreed on the need to continue examining the forecasting of border wait times.

Mr. Williges offered a preview of Chapter 7 of the Border Master Plan. He indicated that Chapter 7 addresses the economic importance of the border in the future, the impact of border delays on GDP, and the need for infrastructure. The chapter also reflects that addressing the forecasted increases in demand and wait times will create a positive impact on the economy.

Ms. Mays confirmed that Chapter 7 would be discussed at the next BTAC meeting. She encouraged members to continue providing feedback between meetings. Ms. Mays also indicated that she would follow up with members who expressed concerns during the meeting. Ms. Mays reiterated that there would be monthly BTAC meetings for the foreseeable future and that she would send members additional materials for their review.

## **V. Open Discussion – Future Meetings and Topics**

Secretary Hughs reminded members that the next meeting would be held via videoconference on August 6, 2020. She encouraged members to continue providing valuable feedback on the Border Master Plan. Ms. Mays clarified that the committee's goal is to present the Border Master Plan to the Transportation Commission in October 2020 and obtain the Commission's approval of the plan in December 2020.

Secretary Hughs closed the meeting by thanking BTAC members and guests for participating in the meeting.



## **VI. Adjourn**

Having no further business, Sam Vale moved to adjourn the meeting. Eduardo Calvo seconded the motion. Secretary Hughs adjourned the Border Trade Advisory Committee meeting at 12:00 p.m.