



# Border Trade Advisory Committee

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Summary of Committee Meeting Minutes  
August 6, 2020



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## SUMMARY OF MINUTES

### Border Trade Advisory Committee

### Texas Department of Transportation

Austin, TX

August 6, 2020

**BTAC Members/Designees:** Ruth Hughs, Texas Secretary of State, Chair, Rafael Aldrete, Commissioner Julian Alvarez III, Eduardo Calvo, Andrew Canon, David Coronado, John Esparza, Josue Garcia, Cynthia Garza-Reyes, Marga Lopez, Juan Olaguibel (on behalf of Anzalduas/Hidalgo international bridge), Stan Meador, Commissioner Vince Perez, Mayor Pete Saenz, , Gerry Schwebel, Sam Vale, Warren Eardman (on behalf of Kansas City Southern), Mayor Luis Sifuentes (on behalf of the city of Eagle Pass), Megan Shea (on behalf of BNSF railway), Fred Brown (on behalf of Pharr international bridge).

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

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Welcome and Introductions**
- III. Approval of Minutes from July 9, 2020 meeting (action item)**



Secretary Hughs called the meeting to order at 805 a.m. and welcomed the Border Trade Advisory Committee (BTAC) members and special guests. On motion of Josue Garcia, seconded by Sam Vale, members approved the minutes of the July 9, 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). Giacomo Yaquinto (TxDOT) summarized BTAC's July 2020 meeting, the Border Master Plan, and other BTAC-related activities.

Chris Williges (HDR) presented an overview of Chapter 7 of the Border Master Plan. Mr. Williges explained that Chapter 7 outlines the economic importance of the border, highlights the economic impact caused by delays and the need for infrastructure to address those delays, and provides input on the overall implementation of the plan. Mr. Williges described the key messages in Chapter 7, including that the border supports the economies of the border region and beyond in Mexico and Texas. Mr. Williges also discussed how current delays at the border represent missed economic opportunities. Mr. Williges provided data on the impact of the Texas-Mexico border on the GDP and job creation in both countries.

Mr. Williges explained that the vast majority of the border's economic impact is due to the movement of goods but is also attributable to the movement of people. In addition, he noted that activity in the border region is critical to the supply chains in both nations. Mr. Williges further described that nearly all of the economic impact generated by the movement of people across the border stays within the border region, contributing to the economies of Texas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. Chapter 7 also addresses the economic cost of border wait times and analyzes how the movement of people contributes to the economies of the border region.

BTAC members provided comments on Chapter 7. Eduardo Calvo recommended including wait-time data for ports of entry from various sources such as the Border Crossing Information System. Members agreed with this recommendation.



Alejandro Solis (HDR) presented information on Chapter 8. This chapter reflects the process for developing recommendations and the implementation plan. The chapter identifies strategies and develops a framework to evaluate those strategies, using criteria that align with the goals of the Border Master Plan. Mr. Solis noted that projects are identified by region, and TXDOT has created a list of characteristics for each project so that they can be evaluated appropriately in the plan.

BTAC members provided comments on Chapter 8. Sam Vale expressed his agreement with the chapter's presentation. Mr. Vale also noted that border stakeholders need to work with health agencies to address current health concerns and identify strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Alejandro Solis (HDR) presented an overview of Chapter 10 of the Border Master Plan. This chapter analyzes the financial constraints associated with each project and identifies recommendations to address those financial concerns.

Camille Wu briefed members on other portions of Chapter 10. Ms. Wu noted that Chapter 10 identifies operational efficiency as a key need across the border. Finding solutions for this issue will address border wait times and delays, roadway congestion, and blocked crossings. Ms. Wu also discussed the need to expand border capacity to address the continued growth of the border region and the transportation demand that this will create. Ms. Wu indicated that Chapter 10 identifies solutions to address this need. Ms. Wu outlined other needs highlighted in Chapter 10 and identified the solutions recommended in this chapter.

Gail Lewis briefed members on Chapter 10 as well. She highlighted the portions of Chapter 10 relating to program recommendations that address the needs presented earlier in the chapter. Ms. Lewis explained that programs are aligned under specific policy goals, and each goal addresses a need identified in the Border Master Plan. Ms. Lewis noted that those goals reflect the border crossing, the movement of commercial goods across the border, and the connected corridors. Chapter 10 also outlines policy recommendations for rail, seaports and airports.



Mr. Solis discussed the rest of Chapter 10. Mr. Solis noted that Chapter 10 identifies certain aspirational projects and connects them to potential funding sources. Mr. Solis explained that the plan identifies 43 TxDOT projects that are fully funded, partially funded, or unfunded. Mr. Solis that noted that this set of projects reflects an initial sample and TxDOT will work with each region to include their respective priority projects in the Border Master Plan.

BTAC members provided comments on Chapter 10. Gerry Schwebel emphasized that the border area must remain flexible and adapt to ever-changing challenges. Mr. Schwebel also stressed the importance of constant dialogue among state leaders and border communities. Mr. Vale mentioned that international bridges must submit a usability report every two years and make appropriate repairs based on the report. David Coronado suggested that Mexico consider establishing programs, similar to those in the United States, that facilitate funding for additional Customs and Border Protection staff and infrastructure projects. Eduardo Calvo advocated for increased coordination between each region and TxDOT to ensure that a project's priority designation is consistent with the interest of the applicable region.

Mr. Solis presented information on Chapter 11 of the Border Master Plan. He explained that Chapter 11 will assign a timeframe for accomplishing the goals presented in previous chapters.

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

Secretary Hughs thanked members for their consistent participation and engagement during the meetings. Secretary Hughs reminded members that the Border Master Plan is in its final stages of drafting, and she emphasized the importance of adhering to BTAC's goal of presenting a final version of the plan to legislators in 2021.

## **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 12:09 p.m.