

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
BORDER TRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

NOVEMBER 9, 2023

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The above-entitled Border Trade Advisory Committee meeting was taken on the 9th day of November, 2023, before Patrick Stephens, Certified Court Reporter, reported by stenographic means, at 6230 E. Stassney Lane, Austin, Texas 78744, and via Zoom.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BTAC COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Texas Secretary of State Hon. Jane Nelson, Chair

Rafael M. Aldrete, Texas Transportation Institute

Jon Barela, Borderplex Alliance

Luis Alfredo Bazan, Pharr International Bridge

Eduardo Calvo, El Paso MPO

Andrew Canon, Rio Grande Valley MPO

John Esparza, Texas Trucking Association

Dante Galeazzi, Texas International Produce Association

Jake Giesbrecht, Presidio International Port Authority

Maria-Elena Giner, Intl. Boundary & Water Commission

Iliana Holguin, Guadalupe-Tornillo Bridge

Stan Meador, Texas Pacifico Transportation

Kyle Morgan, CPKC Railway

Gerardo Gerry Schwebel, International Bank of Commerce

Pete Sepulveda, Jr., Cameron County Bridge System

A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont.)

ALSO PRESENT:

Alejandro G. Meade, III, TxDOT Commissioner

Caroline A. Mays, AICP, TxDOT Director

Hon. Pablo Marentes, Mexican General Consulate (Austin, TX)

Morris Libson, on behalf of Sec. of Economy of Coahuila

Sergio Vasquez, Intl. Trade & Border Planning Coordinator,  
TxDOT

Claudia Lagos Galindo, Intl. Trade & Border Planning  
Manager, TxDOT

Epigmenio Gonzalez, Laredo District Engineer, TxDOT

Pedro Alvarez, Pharr District Engineer, TxDOT

Tomas Trevino, El Paso District Engineer, TxDOT

Coby Bullard, Senior VP Sales & Marketing, CPKC

Lorena Echeverria de Misi, Corridor Planning, TxDOT

Cary Karnstadt, Corridor Planning, TxDOT

Devorah Karren (Proxy Dr. Marco Gonzalez Valdez) Nuevo León

Vanessa Perez (Proxy Hon. Victor Trevino) City of Laredo

Paul Stresow (Proxy Roberto Tinajero) El Paso Intl. Bridge

Danny McGee (Proxy Hon. Ronaldo Salinas) City of Eagle Pass

Jorge Ramon (Proxy Hon. Alvaro Arreola) City of Del Rio

(via Proxy) Lisa Loftus-Otway, Center for Transportation  
Research (UT)

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 HON. JANE NELSON: Good morning, everyone. The  
3 time is 8:32, and I'd like to call the fourth and final Border  
4 Trade Advisory Committee Meeting of 2023 to order. I'm  
5 Secretary Jane Nelson. Welcome. Because safety comes first, I  
6 would like to recognize Loretta Brown, program manager at the  
7 Texas Department of Transportation to do a brief safety  
8 presentation.

9 MS. BROWN: Good morning. We are actually going  
10 to play a video for you to make sure you're safe while you're at  
11 our beautiful facility. Thanks for coming.

12 (Safety video played.)

13 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. (Speaking foreign  
14 language.) Today we have the opportunity to delve deeper into  
15 significance -- to the significance of the Texas-Mexico border  
16 region, a geographic area that has long been recognized as a  
17 critical hub for trade, commerce and cross-cultural exchange.  
18 (Reviewing.) Yes. As we continue our discussions, I'm confident  
19 that we will uncover new insights and perspectives that will  
20 help us better understand the complex dynamics at play in this  
21 ever evolving region. (Speaking foreign-language.)

22 I will keep my remarks brief as time is of the  
23 essence today. Let's ensure that we make the most of our time  
24 and stay focused on our goals. However, I would like to  
25 acknowledge a few guests and -- from both sides of the border.

1 As we focus on our goals, please, I would like to ask everyone  
2 to keep their remarks brief because we do have quite a lot of  
3 business to take care of. And please keep your applause -- I  
4 know y'all want to applaud everyone, but please keep your  
5 applause till the very end.

6 First I want to recognize Commissioner Alex  
7 Meade. We appreciate, Commissioner, your gracious hospitality  
8 and warm welcome to the Texas Department of Transportation  
9 campus here today. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to  
10 hold our BTAC meeting at this beautiful location. I want to  
11 welcome -- and we'll give an opportunity for remarks in just a  
12 minute. We want to welcome Mike Banks, Border Czar, appointed  
13 by Governor Abbott. We need you-all to wave, Abbott --  
14 Commissioner -- Commissioner... I don't know if I just promoted  
15 or demoted you -- Czar Banks. Welcome.

16 I want to welcome Joe McGruder, business  
17 retention and industry specialist. Joe -- where'd Joe go?  
18 Raise your hand so we can see you. Where's Joe? He's not --  
19 okay. Must not be here yet. Priscilla Duran, existing industry  
20 and industrial specialist from the Texas Economic Development  
21 office. I want to thank you for coming today. Priscilla, raise  
22 your hand.

23 MS. DURAN: (Complies with request.)

24 HON. JANE NELSON: There -- there she is right  
25 there. Thank you for being here today. Representing the

1 United States Senator Ted Cruz, we have Javier Salinas, regional  
2 director. Raise your hand.

3 MR. SALINAS: (Complies with request.)

4 HON. JANE NELSON: There we go. Welcome. Today  
5 we have the privilege of welcoming Mexico's consul general in  
6 Austin -- he's not here yet but he will be here; I'll introduce  
7 him when he gets here -- Pablo Marentes. I want to extend  
8 special recognition to the state officials from Mexico who are  
9 present with us today. Representing the Secretary of Economic  
10 Development of Coahuila, Claudio Bres.

11 MR. BRES: Thank you for the invite.

12 HON. JANE NELSON: We also have Morris Libson,  
13 special advisor to Secretary Reyes. Representing Marco  
14 Gonzalez, Secretary of Regional and Agricultural Development for  
15 the State of Nuevo León, we have Devorah Karren, Director of  
16 International Relations of Nuevo León. We're so happy to have  
17 you here.

18 MS. KARREN: Thank you for having us.

19 HON. JANE NELSON: (Speaking foreign language.)  
20 We want to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all of our  
21 esteemed partners for their collaboration with the State of  
22 Texas. Your partnership has been invaluable to us and we do  
23 look forward to strengthening our relationship in the future.

24 Before proceeding with attendance, we want to  
25 thank the Department of Transportation for generously hosting us

1 on this stunning campus today, and certainly for the  
2 refreshments that they've provided to us out in the lobby. I  
3 want to additionally extend an invitation to some of the  
4 important officials -- everyone here is important, but to those  
5 that I just introduced to make brief statements to the  
6 committee, and, again, if you'd limit your remarks to about a  
7 minute, that would be wonderful. First, Transportation  
8 Commissioner Alex Meade. Commissioner, do you want to say a  
9 couple of remarks?

10 COMMISSIONER MEADE: Good morning, everybody.  
11 Welcome to TxDOT and this amazing campus. I want to thank y'all  
12 for being here today. You know, this topic for me is just  
13 something that's very important. As you-all know, I was born  
14 and raised in the Rio Grande Valley, my parents are from Mexico,  
15 and so the border for me is very, very important.

16 You know, I've had the opportunity to tour the  
17 state of Texas these last seven months and, you know, one of the  
18 things that I've learned as I've toured the border -- and I'm  
19 going to challenge you guys to do this. As I visited with  
20 border communities, they typically start off by saying, I don't  
21 mean to complain, but I want to share with you some concerns.  
22 Well, you know, we don't -- we can complain. It's okay to  
23 complain. Right? It's okay to share your concerns because the  
24 border is very important to the state of Texas, and as you-all  
25 know, nothing happens in Texas without the border.



1                   And so -- so it's okay to complain. Don't see it  
2 as something negative. I know it's more cultural -- right? --  
3 we don't like to complain, as Hispanics, we typically don't, and  
4 being born and raised and, you know, in the -- you know, when  
5 you're literally on the border, it's a cultural thing. And so  
6 I'm going to challenge you guys to make us aware of all of the  
7 concerns that you do have and don't see it as a negative because  
8 it is important for us to learn about what's going on in the  
9 communities, it is important to the state of Texas and we're  
10 here to support you guys in all of the things that you guys are  
11 doing. So appreciate y'all being here. Thank you so much.  
12 Secretary?

13                   HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. And I believe that  
14 next to you we have a very important new guest. Sitting next to  
15 you, we have the privilege of welcoming Mexico's Consul General  
16 in Austin, Pablo Hernandez. Welcome. We are so delighted to  
17 have you here.

18                   MR. PABLO GONZALEZ: Thank you so much. I'm  
19 almost a citizen of Texas. I had gone here to school a long  
20 time ago at Texas A&M Consolidated High School. I know many,  
21 many people since that time. They were eager to have a  
22 discussion as we are having today. That would have brought  
23 many, many, many efforts that went to the basket [sic], but at  
24 that time, they really were looking for an understanding of the  
25 people that were leaving for the first time their home country

1 and they wanted to know where were the conditions of -- or what  
2 to do with where -- to -- needing -- the guys that wanted to  
3 work and wanted to also -- to -- to have their families not in  
4 Europe but right near the place which had welcomed him (ph).

5 I'm very happy that I was able to come this  
6 morning. Although I have nothing that makes contagious here or  
7 anything, but I have a bad throat. So I thank you so very much,  
8 and I hope that this is the kind of gathering that we help two  
9 countries to see that they really constitute in the mind of  
10 everybody something that we have -- we have to make our efforts  
11 -- to do our efforts to maintain a solid friendship and [sic]  
12 the purposes of doing something on behalf of the prosperity of  
13 both countries. I thank you so very much for your invitation.

14 HON. JANE NELSON: (Speaking foreign language.)  
15 Counsul General Marentes is one of the first individuals to  
16 welcome me in my office as Secretary of State, and he promised  
17 to help me with my Espanol. (Speaking foreign language.) Good  
18 to see you again, and I hope your throat gets better.

19 And also I would like to welcome to Consul  
20 General's left, Brandye Hendrickson, our deputy TxDOT director.  
21 Welcome.

22 MS. HENDRICKSON: Am I supposed to speak?

23 HON. JANE NELSON: Do you have anything you want  
24 to say?

25 MS. HENDRICKSON: If you didn't have cedar

1 allergies when you came, you'll have them before you leave.  
2 Welcome to Austin. I just want to welcome everyone and thank  
3 you for being here today, and really the work of this committee  
4 is so important and I look forward to having lots of good  
5 conversation and engagement over the course of the day. Thanks.

6 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. Next -- let's see  
7 -- Devorah Karren from Nuevo León. Would you like to say a few  
8 words in Español or English?

9 MS. KARREN: Well, thank you for having us here.  
10 Dr. Marco Gonzalez sends his regards and his apologies that he  
11 could not be here. And in a short time, there's going to be a  
12 brief presentation of Nuevo León and all of the investment that  
13 is arriving right now to Nuevo León. So thank you for having us  
14 here.

15 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. Now Morris Libson  
16 from Coahuila.

17 MR. LIBSON: Good morning.

18 HON. JANE NELSON: Good morning.

19 MR. LIBSON: On behalf of Governor Riquelme and  
20 Secretary Reyes, they send their regards. We want to thank you  
21 for having us here today. There is, like the Commissioner  
22 mentioned, very interesting things happening on our border and  
23 more to come, and we're looking forward to that. The state of  
24 Coahuila is, of course, with its border with Texas, which is  
25 now, if it were a country, I think the seventh or eighth economy

1 in the world, but we do want to thank you for allowing us to be  
2 here. And Governor Riquelme will be leaving office at the end  
3 of this month, but we have Governor-elect Manolo Jimenez, a  
4 young energetic politician that is going to do well for the  
5 state of Coahuila. So thank you very much.

6 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. Welcome. I want  
7 to thank you all for being a partner in Texas, and I would like  
8 to recognize Caroline Mays, who I think everyone knows, the  
9 Director of Planning and Modal Programs for the Texas Department  
10 of Transportation to conduct our roll call now, please.

11 MS. MAYS: Good morning, and thank you very much,  
12 Secretary. I appreciate, you know, the welcome, but also as  
13 Brandye mentioned, on behalf of TxDOT, we want to welcome all  
14 BTAC members to this meeting first, and, you know, we have staff  
15 here if you want to navigate the campus or anything, please --  
16 you know, staff is standing by. It's a fairly new campus and we  
17 have security, you know, protocols around here. You know, so  
18 just let us know if anything happens during the meeting. But,  
19 you know, with that, Secretary, I think the roll call can --  
20 thank you very much. And, Claudia, can you please go ahead and  
21 do the roll call?

22 MS. LAGOS: Yes, Secretary Caroline, I'm going to  
23 start doing it. Rafael Aldrete?

24 MR. ALDRETE: Present.

25 MS. LAGOS: Al Arreola?

1 MR. RAMON: Proxy Jorge Ramon, present.

2 MS. LAGOS: Jon Barela?

3 MR. BARELA: Present.

4 MS. LAGOS: Luiz Bazan?

5 MR. BAZAN: Present.

6 MS. LAGOS: Eduardo Calvo?

7 MR. CALVO: Present.

8 MS. LAGOS: Eduardo Campirano? Rio Grande  
9 Valley, someone before [sic] Andrew Canon?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's here.

11 MS. LAGOS: John Esparza? Raquel Espinosa?  
12 Juan Antonio Flores? Dante Galeazzi?

13 MR. GALEAZZI: Present.

14 MS. LAGOS: Cynthia Garza? Jake Giesbrecht?

15 MR. GIESBRECHT: Present.

16 MS. LAGOS: Maria-Elena Giner?

17 MS. GINER: Present.

18 MS. LAGOS: Iliana Holguin?

19 MS. HOLGUIN: Good morning. Present.

20 MS. LAGOS: Lisa Loftus-Otway?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Proxy.

22 MS. LAGOS: Marga Lopez? Stan Meador?

23 MR. MEADOR: Present.

24 MS. LAGOS: Daniel Mendoza? Jason Modglin?  
25 Kyle Morgan?

1 MR. MORGAN: Present.

2 MS. LAGOS: Juan Olaguibel? Rolando Salinas?

3 MR. MCGEE: Danny McGee on his behalf.

4 MS. LAGOS: Gerry Schwebel?

5 MR. SCHWEBEL: Present.

6 MS. LAGOS: Pete Sepulveda?

7 MR. SEPULVEDA: Present.

8 MS. LAGOS: Daniel Silva? Roberto Tinajero?

9 MR. STRESOW: Paul Stresow, proxy.

10 MS. LAGOS: Thank you. Victor Trevino?

11 MS. PEREZ: Mayor Pro Tem Vanessa Perez, proxy  
12 for Victor Trevino.

13 MS. LAGOS: Thank you. Sam Vale?

14 Cameron Walker? Carlos Yerena? We have 19.

15 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. A quorum is  
16 established. I will now move the adoption of the minutes from  
17 the August 22nd, 2023, meeting of the Border Trade Advisory  
18 Committee held in McAllen. Has everyone reviewed the minutes?  
19 I'm certain you did. I will now call for a motion to adopt the  
20 minutes. Please note that only BTAC members or their designated  
21 representatives can make a motion or second it. After you make  
22 your motion or second, please identify yourselves so that it may  
23 be recorded in the minutes.

24 MS. HOLGUIN: I'll make a motion to adopt the  
25 minutes, Iliana Holguin for the Guadalupe-Tornillo Bridge.

1 HON. JANE NELSON: All right.

2 MS. PEREZ: I'll second that.

3 HON. JANE NELSON: All right. It has been moved  
4 and seconded. All of those in favor of the adoption, say aye.

5 BTAC MEMBERS: (Collective) Aye.

6 HON. JANE NELSON: Is anyone opposed?

7 BTAC MEMBERS: (No response.)

8 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. The minutes from the  
9 Committee's August 22nd meeting are adopted. Moving on, I want  
10 to recognize Sergio Vasquez, International Trade and Border  
11 Planning Coordinator from the Texas Department of  
12 Transportation, to please provide a recap of the August 22nd  
13 meeting. Sergio?

14 MR. VASQUEZ: Thank you, Secretary Nelson. Good  
15 morning, everyone. I want to thank y'all for joining us. Let  
16 me give you a brief recap of our last BTAC meeting in McAllen on  
17 August 22nd, 2023.

18 The last BTAC meeting had six mini tasks. The  
19 first item was an update on the BTMP advancements on recommended  
20 studies. Marvina Cephas with TxDOT International Trade and  
21 Border Planning Branch along with TxDOT consultants provided an  
22 outline, the First and Last Mile Connectivity Study and the  
23 Border Crossing Connectivity Study.

24 Ms. Cephas indicated the study was composed of  
25 two parts. The First and Last Mile Connectivity Study focused

1 on identifying key items including bottlenecks, roadway network  
2 gaps, safety hotspots and missing links between the  
3 Texas-Mexican border.

4           The second part is the Border Crossing  
5 Connectivity Study, which focuses on identifying gaps in the  
6 modes of transportation, necessary work between border crossings  
7 between Texas and Mexico. Ms. Cephas and consultants also  
8 provided an overview of the Binational Workshop held by TxDOT in  
9 McAllen on July 19th and their findings. An overview of the  
10 feedback gathered through the workshop and feedback obtained  
11 through the Border Connectivity Issues Identification Tool were  
12 represented. There were no comments offered by the BTAC  
13 members.

14           The second item was a legislative update from the  
15 88th Regular Session. Mr. Wesley Starnes with TxDOT State  
16 Legislative Affairs briefed members on the Texas Legislature  
17 88th Regular Session. Mr. Starnes provided an overview of the  
18 past biannual budget for FY '24 and '25. Mr. Starnes then  
19 discussed the funding allocated to TxDOT for project  
20 development, delivery and maintenance.

21           Mr. Starnes also highlighted several  
22 transportation bills adopted in the regular session in the  
23 approved TxDOT Unified Transportation Program for the next 10  
24 years, which was well over \$100 billion. The Honorable  
25 Secretary-General soon offered comments and indicated that the



1 88th Legislature was very transportation friendly due to strong  
2 advocates in the legislature.

3           The third item was a presentation on a TxDOT  
4 US-83 corridor study. Ms. Lorena Echeverria de Misi,  
5 Mr. Steve Linhart with TxDOT Corridor and Planning Branch  
6 presented the results of a US-83 corridor regional study.  
7 Ms. de Misi [sic] and Mr. Linhart reminded members that the  
8 study was conducted based on the recommendations of the BTMP to  
9 evaluate the conditions that could enhance mobility, safety and  
10 connectivity between Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley. The  
11 presenters noted that the study's finding will provide key  
12 insights on the issues facing the study corridor and help TxDOT  
13 plan, design and construct adequate improvements.

14           The fourth item on the agenda was Connecting  
15 Texas 2050. Mr. Giacomo Yaquinto, State Board Planner and TxDOT  
16 Planning Branch, outlined the planning -- outlined the  
17 Connecting Texas 2050 Transportation Plan, which focused on  
18 integrating statewide corridor and multi-modal planning efforts.  
19 Mr. Yaquinto explained that TxDOT collaborated with stakeholders  
20 who created scenarios and narratives to achieve performance and  
21 strategic goals. Mr. Yaquinto also informed members TxDOT is  
22 interested in hearing from members on key needs, strategies and  
23 recommendations from the BTMP that can be elevated and included  
24 with the Connecting Texas 2050. BTAC members provided comments  
25 and recommendations regarding the Connecting Texas 2050.

1 Ms. Caroline Mays added comments on the importance of  
2 Connecting Texas 2050 and how crucial it is to ensure the plan  
3 highlights border infrastructure and needs.

4 With Dante Galeazzi with the Texas International  
5 Produce Association indicated some of the long-term issues that  
6 are being encountered in the Rio Grande Valley and the  
7 congestion issues that impact the movement of goods and produce.

8 The next item was an overview of the TxDOT  
9 Mexico City meetings. Ms. Claudia Lagos Galindo, manager of  
10 International Trade and Border Planning, gave an overview of  
11 TxDOT recent meetings in Mexico City. Ms. Lagos highlighted the  
12 meeting for the public and private sectors officials including  
13 the Secretary of Communications and Infrastructure, aduanas'  
14 representative, the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs and  
15 automotive industry groups to stress the need for continued  
16 binational collaboration, information-sharing and cross-border  
17 trade. Ms. Caroline Mays also underscored the importance of  
18 continued collaboration with her Mexican counterparts.

19 The sixth item was the Regional Infrastructure  
20 Planning Efforts. Mr. Eduardo Campriano with the Port of  
21 Brownsville highlighted the importance of maritime  
22 transportation and the Port of Brownsville efforts to enhance  
23 its infrastructure. He also informed members of the two current  
24 liquefied natural gas projects.

25 Mr. Pete Sepulveda discussed expansions of the

1 Veteran Bridge and other efforts. Mr. Luis Bazan shared details  
2 about the current projects at the Pharr International Bridge;  
3 Mr. Juan Olaguibel with the McAllen-Hidalgo-Anzalduas  
4 International Bridge discussed an ongoing 8.5 billion  
5 infrastructure bridge project that would enable for cargo dry  
6 goods to pass through the bridge.

7 Mr. Andrew Canon with the Rio Grande Valley MPO  
8 gave a general breakdown of projects in the UTP, referencing  
9 projects around the metro (ph) system and intersections (ph) in  
10 the region. Mr. Pete Alvarez, TxDOT Pharr District engineer,  
11 provided information regarding certain projects in the Pharr  
12 District.

13 Following an impactful discussion, BTAC members  
14 received updates from the Mexican state of Nuevo León-  
15 Tamaulipas, regarding infrastructure projects in their  
16 respective states. Secretary Marco Gonzalez from the state of  
17 Nuevo León commended the strong partnership between Texas and  
18 Nuevo León. Under Secretary Sergio Guajardo with the state of  
19 Tamaulipas identified several infrastructure projects including  
20 the relocation of aduanas from Laredo.

21 Lastly, the committee held an open discussion  
22 regarding future meetings and topics. Mr. Jason Modglin  
23 suggested discussion -- suggested discussing the trade of oil,  
24 natural gas and refined products between the United States and  
25 Mexico at a future meeting. Mayor Victor Trevnio expressed the

1 importance of unity and collaboration among border stakeholders.

2 Secretary Nelson thanked BTAC members and guests  
3 for their participation in the meeting. This concludes the  
4 recap of the August 22nd, 2023, meeting. Thank you.

5 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. I'd like to  
6 recognize Director Mays for a very important introduction.

7 MS. MAYS: Thank you, Secretary. I wanted to  
8 take the opportunity -- I think you guy's see Andrew Canon  
9 sitting on a different side of the room, not as a BTAC member  
10 but as TxDOT staff, so I wanted to, you know, announce that  
11 Andrew has taken the position of section director that oversees  
12 border planning, freight planning and corridor connectivity  
13 planning at TxDOT. So I just wanted to give Andrew, you know,  
14 30 seconds to introduce himself and his role. He's no longer a  
15 BTAC member. So, yeah, Andrew?

16 MR. CANON: Well, the boss said I have to talk.  
17 I want to thank Caroline and everybody here for giving me the  
18 opportunity to come back to TxDOT. It's been exciting. It's  
19 definitely been drinking from a fire hydrant for the last three  
20 days, hoping to catch up, I know it'll take a little time, and  
21 I'm very excited to be able to apply the knowledge that I was  
22 fortunate enough to pick up over the last 20 years of being down  
23 in the Valley and working with so many of you in the border  
24 community and hopefully bring that up here to Austin. Yes,  
25 Gerry, you, too, on your number two bridge. Sorry. A little

1 inside dig there. I'm surprised he didn't already yell at me  
2 that Laredo is number one. So --

3 MR. SCHWEBEL: Number one.

4 MR. CANON: So -- but, no, I do appreciate it and  
5 I hope that I'm very useful and beneficial to all of you in my  
6 new role, so please -- I think all of you have my phone number.  
7 If not, get with me. I'm always available to be contacted and  
8 to see what we can do to continue improving things along the  
9 border and how that connects up with our connectivity in the  
10 freight because it's all intertwined, and one cannot  
11 successfully exist without the other. So I just appreciate the  
12 opportunity to be here and continue helping all of you.

13 MS. MAYS: Well, welcome, Andrew. And I'll take  
14 the opportunity also to recognize two border district -- you  
15 know, we have Epi from Laredo, we have Pete from Pharr and have  
16 El Paso -- yes, we have El Paso in the house, and also,  
17 Secretary, I just want to recognize the TxDOT staff, the border  
18 team and also the division folks that really put all of this  
19 together. So I just want to, again, recognize them. A lot of  
20 them are here, that they really made this work, and so they  
21 undertake that and conduct many conferences. So anytime with  
22 all BTAC, it's a lot that goes behind it, so I just want to  
23 recognize and thank them for their work.

24 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. We do appreciate  
25 you. We appreciate everyone. I would like to recognize

1 Claudia Lagos, manager of the International Trade and Border  
2 Planning Branch, Epigmenio Gonzalez, Laredo District Engineer,  
3 Pedro Alvarez, Pharr District Engineer, and Raul Ortega,  
4 Director of Transportation, Planning and Development, in El Paso  
5 from the Texas Department of Transportation to provide a  
6 progress update on the Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master  
7 Plan Recommendations, and I will hand it over to Claudia.

8 MS. LAGOS: Thank you, Madam Secretary and  
9 committee members. Good morning. Today I would like to come  
10 and present you like the progress on -- or the update on what is  
11 happening on the Border Master Plan since we adopt [sic] it.  
12 For us, today is very important to bring you exactly what is the  
13 status on what we have been doing since 2021 that the Border  
14 Master Plan was adopted.

15 As you-all may remember, these plan [sic]  
16 identify the actual and the future needs, challenges and  
17 opportunities that we have or identify for transportation for  
18 moving people and goods across the border. This is very, very  
19 important because we tried to map everything that was crucial  
20 for the border and for the movement of people and goods, not  
21 just in terms of what's for Texas and the user but also for our  
22 Mexican counterparts.

23 This Border Master Plan also gave us a outline,  
24 the policy program and projects that [sic] our recommendation,  
25 and we have been working on those since the plan was adopted,

1 and it's very, very important and I reported to you in our  
2 previous meeting that our collaboration with the Mexican board  
3 (ph), it has been very strong and we continue to have that one  
4 in [sic] a regular basis because all of the effort that we are  
5 doing on the Border Master Plan, we need to have them at the  
6 table.

7                   So when we identified the recommendations on the  
8 Border Master Plan, we identified 661 projects that represented  
9 31 -- \$37.4 billion at the moment, and when we started those  
10 projects, there were two big groups, like ones from the Mexican  
11 side and ones from the US side. On the US side, we have 559  
12 projects that were a total of \$32.7 billion, and those -- from  
13 those projects, 102 projects were in Mexico; 193 were border  
14 crossings -- and this is important to mention because we always  
15 say that we are not in charge of border crossings. What is our  
16 duty is everything that is happening outside the border  
17 crossing, but that doesn't mean that we are not really in  
18 contact with CBP or any of the federal entities that are in  
19 charge of what is happening inside of those border facilities,  
20 and also with Mexican authorities.

21                   And we also identified 468 projects that were  
22 related to corridors, and that is a big part that was really  
23 focused on -- related to TxDOT. Here I tried to separate from  
24 the 661 and give you like a little idea how those 61 were  
25 divided, and what is important here -- and we also ask for your

1 help -- and I think it was in El Paso and probably on our BTAC  
2 in July last year, we had started to -- for you to help us with  
3 the stakeholders and the sponsors for each of the projects  
4 because we were tracking the status and the -- any of the  
5 improvements that were made on those projects.

6                   So we have been seeing [sic] any of the  
7 improvement and -- and what is the actual -- the status for  
8 those and we focus on what is on TxDOT, and we have 246, and  
9 that is what I'm going to focus my presentation [sic], and  
10 that's why we have the three district engineers here with us  
11 because we wanted to show you what are we working on and what of  
12 those projects we [sic] have been implemented already and ask --  
13 you will see this Border Master Plan is alive.

14                   So we have 661 at that moment, but now we can  
15 probably have so many projects added to that list because the  
16 districts have some other projects that are -- that they have  
17 identified that are needs. So for this presentation and  
18 probably after each of the districts' presentations, we will  
19 really want to hear your feedback, and if you want to share with  
20 us if we are really -- are identifying the needs on [sic] the  
21 region, if you are really seeing what we are reflecting here is  
22 what you are seeing on [sic] the field and what you are seeing  
23 in [sic] a daily basis that is happening on the border.

24                   So TxDOT has been investing a lot not just on the  
25 three border districts but in all of the districts that



1 represents TxDOT, and the investment that we have right now on  
2 these three border districts, it's \$8.4 billion, and that's the  
3 idea to show you how we are putting the money in those districts  
4 and we are, like, prioritizing the projects that really focus  
5 on helping us to alleviate the congestion at the border and  
6 facilitate any of the moves of people and goods along the  
7 border.

8                   And here we just wanted to show you -- we tried  
9 to emphasize and compare how we have been investing at the  
10 border districts since 2016, and you can see here that we have  
11 grown 356 percent of the money that TxDOT is putting on the  
12 three border districts. So this is the level of engagement that  
13 we are having on this -- what is happening to the border and --  
14 on the projects that are important for the border districts.

15                   So I would like to pass the microphone to the  
16 district engineers, and please feel free after each of the  
17 district engineers shares their projects to give us your input  
18 on really what you are seeing and if we are really addressing  
19 the needs of your region. Thank you.

20                   UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I ask a question?

21                   HON. JANE NELSON: Yes, sir, yes, sir. Excuse  
22 me. Don't start yet. We have a question, and you are  
23 recognized.

24                   MR. SCHWEBEL: Claudia, on the 51 projects that  
25 have been canceled, are we -- can we get a status of those

1 canceled projects? How do you notify the Committee as to what's  
2 been canceled, the 51?

3 MS. LAGOS: Can you go back, please? Can you go  
4 back on the slide?

5 TECHNICIAN: (Complies with request.)

6 MS. LAGOS: One more, one more, one more, the  
7 three -- yeah, that one.

8 HON. JANE NELSON: Would you repeat your question  
9 so that --

10 MR. SCHWEBEL: Gerry Schwebel of Laredo. Of  
11 those projects in Texas, 559, you list 51, Canceled, need  
12 additional information, on the TxDOT, and then on the non-TxDOT,  
13 184 canceled and need additional information. There's a  
14 difference between canceled and maybe they just want more  
15 information.

16 HON. JANE NELSON: Sure.

17 MR. SCHWEBEL: How do we find out what those are?

18 HON. JANE NELSON: Good question.

19 MS. LAGOS: Yeah, Gerry, thank you. Yes, this is  
20 kind of the things that we have been struggling with, the  
21 information, and we have been trying to get in contact with the  
22 sponsor that presented those projects when we did the Border  
23 Master Plan, and at some point they just mentioned that the  
24 projects were really on the planning stage and really they are  
25 not getting those projects to action. That's one of the reasons

1 that we got in some of the cases.

2 And then the other one is that we haven't really  
3 get the -- the real information on the status of the projects.  
4 So we are continue [sic] doing that. We implemented a tool that  
5 is a project implementation tracker, and we have been  
6 contacting, and -- and we continue doing that because we are not  
7 stopped with that. We are not really comfortable with the level  
8 of information that we've got and we continuing that.

9 HON. JANE NELSON: Another question. Wait till  
10 we get you a mic. One is coming for the people in the back.

11 MS. LAGOS: And just in general, we are -- have  
12 someone helping us with the notes and the recording. If you --  
13 everybody can give us name and the -- the organization that you  
14 work or stand [sic] before giving your comments so we can have  
15 it on the notes, please.

16 HON. JANE NELSON: Perfect. Good recommendation.  
17 Go ahead.

18 MS. PEREZ: Vanessa Perez, Mayor Pro Tem, City of  
19 Laredo. I want to go to the TxDOT invest-in-border-districts  
20 slide because I have a question -- or maybe a comment. It's --  
21 we've broken Texas down into three categories. We're kind of  
22 lumped into the urban district category, and if you look at the  
23 metro funding and the urban funding, metro is almost double what  
24 urban funding is, but urban funding incorporates all of the  
25 different areas, and since we're Border Trade Advisory

1 Committee, I would recommend that we create a separate category  
2 and call it a border district.

3           And if we're really investing in the border, we  
4 challenge the border district to receive funding above the rural  
5 because rural is almost as much as the urban, yet the needs are  
6 very great, and I can tell you from Laredo's needs that we're  
7 very congested. And although we may be progressing into  
8 increasing funding, I feel like it's not an accurate reflection  
9 of Texas to have the border districts lumped into the urban  
10 district category when we should be our own separate district.  
11 My recommendation.

12           HON. JANE NELSON: Yeah. Thank you. Other  
13 questions? There's another question down here.

14           MR. MCGEE: Danny McGee, City of Eagle Pass.  
15 It's not really a question, it's more of a comment. We filled  
16 out that spreadsheet for you guys updating all of our projects,  
17 and the way -- it's a drop-down list and it doesn't give you an  
18 opportunity to really explain what's going on. It says canceled  
19 or need more information. So as Mr. Schwebel was saying, it's  
20 kind of hard for us to say it's one or the other. I think there  
21 needs to be a little bit more thought put into what the  
22 selections are on that spreadsheet.

23           MS. LAGOS: Yes, we take your comments and we are  
24 going to get deep in that. Thank you.

25           HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. All right. Let's move

1 along, and certainly they'll be opportunity for more questions  
2 and comments at the end of the presentation. Okay. Go ahead.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Madam Secretary,  
4 community members, good morning. So it's my pleasure to give  
5 you an update on some of the projects that we're working on in  
6 the Laredo district. So all right. So of the projects that  
7 Claudia mentioned, you know, we have 64 -- 64 projects, and nine  
8 of those projects are funded, we have five that are partially  
9 funded and then 50 that are unfunded -- right? -- that we're  
10 still working to get some construction funding for.

11 So this slide, I wanted to spend a little bit of  
12 time here because, you know, we've completed two projects, we  
13 have 15 projects under construction, 12 of them are in our  
14 schematic and PS&E phase and then 50 others are in the planning  
15 or vis-à-vis study phase. But one of the main things that I  
16 kind of wanted to highlight here is just the difference in cost  
17 -- construction costs between the 2019 estimated amounts and the  
18 2023 amounts. All right?

19 So if we look at, for example, the construction  
20 projects -- in construction, that was over a \$200 million  
21 increase from the estimated amount that was determined back in  
22 2019. Our projects that are in schematic and PS&E have also  
23 seen a significant increase from 640 million to 1.1 billion.  
24 All right? And then the biggest increases in the projects that  
25 we currently have under the planning study -- the planning

1 feasibility study were -- those were estimated -- I think we had  
2 an estimated construction cost of under 4 billion, but now we  
3 estimate construction costs of approximately six and a half  
4 billion. All right? So there's been a tremendous increase.

5                   And I also kind of wanted to highlight the UTP  
6 allocation over the last several years. You know, as you can  
7 see, there's been a significant increase from our 2019 year.  
8 There's been some increases, but then in 2023, we've got a  
9 significant bump and another one in 2024.

10                   So this is a map of our district, and as you can  
11 see, we have projects identified across all of our districts --  
12 the entire district. So the projects that are in green are  
13 projects that are funded that are under development, our  
14 projects that are highlighted in red are under construction and  
15 then the projects that are in blue are projects that are under  
16 plan authority.

17                   So I'm going to talk a little bit more of some of  
18 these projects in a little bit more detail. So a project that  
19 is a major project for our district is the I-35 at Union Pacific  
20 Railroad overpass, and it includes some direct connectors at  
21 I-69 and I-35. That project is under construction and has an  
22 estimated construction cost of 115 million, and we're -- we  
23 should reach completion or near completion by early next year.

24                   A project that we let a couple of months ago in  
25 August is the US-59 upgrade to freeway standards, it's actually

1 our biggest construction project to date, and that's basically  
2 from International all the way to Jacaman, and it came in at 344  
3 million, and we anticipate starting construction here in -- by  
4 March-April of next year. We still have a portion of US-59 that  
5 we still need to complete, so we're working with Webb County and  
6 the City of Laredo and working through some environmental  
7 challenges on that one.

8 Another big project for our district is -- we  
9 refer to it as the I-35 at Uniroyal interchange and SH 84, which  
10 is known locally as the Hachar-Reuthinger Parkway. So the I-35  
11 project is basically reconstructing I-35 at Uniroyal, the  
12 overpass and then constructing a new underpass at State  
13 Highway 84, which is the Hachar-Reuthinger, and that has an  
14 estimated -- that date of October of next year and an estimated  
15 construction cost of 160 million. The SH 84 project, we have an  
16 estimated let date of May of next year and it has an estimated  
17 construction cost of just under 150 million.

18 So another major project for us is basically --  
19 would be I-35 at what we refer to as Mile Marker 18, so that's  
20 where I-35 and US-83 departs, and as well along US-83, the  
21 future Interstate 27. So that -- that project -- there's two  
22 projects, that one that I just mentioned and an extension on  
23 US-83. That project has an estimated let date of -- I believe  
24 it's September of '26 -- yes, September of 2026, and a combined  
25 cost of approximately 280 million.

1                   And a project that's already funded is basically  
2 US-59, it's the upgrade to interstate standards, so it's going  
3 to be converted to a four-lane divided highway, and basically  
4 right now we're in the procurement phase for our -- for our  
5 consultants, so we have an estimated let date of September of  
6 2030. Of course we're looking to accelerate this project, and  
7 this project has funding -- or an estimated construction cost of  
8 just over 300 million.

9                   So, as I said, we don't just focus in Laredo, so  
10 our partners from Maverick County and Eagle Pass are very  
11 excited that we have the -- that we got the last leg of State  
12 Loop 480 funded. So we have an estimated let date of September  
13 of 2027, and that estimated construction cost is a little bit  
14 over 140 million.

15                   And then several projects that we have that are  
16 unfunded is basically several segments of I-35, basically from  
17 Mile Marker 20 all the way to the -- to the La Salle-Frio county  
18 line, which is the corridor of the San Antonio district, so  
19 basically that consists of a 62-mile segment of I-35, and that  
20 has an estimated construction cost of, you know, 200 and --  
21 close to 250 million. Of course, you know, we're going to have  
22 to prioritize different segments in -- in this whole stretch or  
23 we're not going to be able to build 62 miles of I-35 at once.

24                   So we have a US-83 project, which again is the  
25 future I-27, and basically it's a segment from State Highway 255



1 all the way to Carrizo Springs, and that includes several  
2 reroutes around some of the -- some of the communities. And  
3 then we have the expansion of Interstate 27 basically from  
4 Carrizo Springs to Edwards county line. And so we're looking at  
5 prioritizing different segments, you know, along that -- along  
6 that route there.

7           We also have a Cuatro Vientos extension, which is  
8 basically an extension of Interstate 2 to the south. That has  
9 an estimated construction cost of just a little bit over 300  
10 million. And we also have the outer loop, which, again, we have  
11 -- we're -- we're picking up on different segments to  
12 prioritize, and that has an estimated construction cost of 1.4  
13 million. And then we -- we're currently looking at FM 1472,  
14 which is Mines Road. It's one of the busiest roads there in  
15 Webb County and the city of Laredo. And then we don't -- we  
16 don't forget about US-57 either and US-90, right? So we're also  
17 working on projects and procuring consultants to work on  
18 US-57 and US-90. And that concludes my portion of the  
19 presentation.

20           MS. LAGOS: We ask you here if after Epi's  
21 presentation, do you think that we are identifying the origins,  
22 things and projects along Laredo, Eagle Pass, Del Rio that are  
23 part of the districts? If you think that we need to put  
24 something else on the radar, how do you think that we are  
25 identifying the origin things on the region?

1 HON. JANE NELSON: Any questions? Gerry?

2 MR. SCHWEBEL: Gerry Schwebel. First of all,  
3 we're very happy. Epi, you're doing a great job, TxDOT is doing  
4 a great job, and we're glad to get our projects, you know,  
5 moving fast, as fast as we can. We know that issues on the  
6 construction costs have had an impact as well, but one of the  
7 things that I think I would like to see is, as we look at these  
8 updates on these projects, how do we tie them into what's in the  
9 BTMP and out from the BTMP, went into the UTP and maybe we  
10 should highlight and identify since one of the things that I  
11 know that Chairman Buck has always said is that all of these  
12 projects are only as good as we execute it or as we implement  
13 it.

14 So it would be helpful for some of us when we go  
15 back to our communities, since we've been working on the BTMP  
16 for so long, and then we'd say, This was included in the BTMP or  
17 this was not, and for the BTMP -- we will remove this project  
18 from the BTMP to the UTP and therefore these are the timetables.  
19 So that would be a suggestion that I would make so that when we  
20 go back to the communities that are involved in all of these  
21 projects, we can match true figures to what was in planning and  
22 the cooperation between all of the communities and with TxDOT.

23 Otherwise, you know, people -- we have a lot of  
24 turnover, we have a few members of city council, we have a lot  
25 of new mayors and county judges. They may not be aware of these

1 projects we've been working on for years and how long it takes  
2 to get this, you know, from the planning, to the design, to the  
3 letting and to the construction and to the eventual completion.  
4 That would be my recommendation.

5 HON. JANE NELSON: That is a wonderful idea, a  
6 progress chart of how far we've come. Yes?

7 MR. LIBSON: And if I may --

8 HON. JANE NELSON: Identify yourself, too,  
9 please. Oh, hold on a minute while we get you a microphone.

10 MR. LIBSON: Morris Libson. I'm here  
11 representing Secretary Bres of the Coahuila border, but I'm  
12 changing hats really quick here. I'd like to speak about  
13 Del Rio and Eagle Pass. I'm also involved with Eagle Pass and  
14 Maverick County Economic Development Alliance, and we have to  
15 start somewhere, like Gerry said, in planning, and it may be  
16 years in the future, but there's interesting things happening on  
17 a second bridge coming for Del Rio, work on bridge two in  
18 Eagle Pass -- Caroline Mays and all of her staff is very  
19 familiar with that.

20 We also have on the radar the Puerto Verde  
21 project, which would be a bridge three for the  
22 Eagle Pass-Maverick County area, so we'd like to somehow make  
23 sure that you put us on the radar as far as infrastructure to --  
24 when all of our international trade traffic there grows  
25 exponentially, we need to be able to move it north and into the

1 United States and in Texas. So we would just like to -- I know  
2 with -- that it takes planning, we know that -- I'm getting a  
3 little bit up in years now, so I may not see it in my lifetime,  
4 but I sure do want for it to get started somewhere. Thank you  
5 very much.

6 HON. JANE NELSON: Yeah. Gerry, just for  
7 clarification, you were talking about a visual -- right? -- a  
8 chart. I'm a visual person, and I totally agree with you, it  
9 would be so nice to see it because I'm a pretty new member  
10 sitting here, and I would love to see a visual of progress made.

11 MR. SCHWEBEL: Especially on the projects that  
12 were high priority -- Gerry Schwebel here. You know, if we look  
13 at the BTMP, we set a -- you know, a priority of the project and  
14 I think we need to make sure that those are high priority, we  
15 don't go to a low priority and we move it up, and I think if we  
16 highlight it and say, Hey, this was a high-priority mayor or a  
17 county judge or -- you know, And this is what's happening. It  
18 is there, it is happening, and we just highlight that this was  
19 -- this was part of the BTMP, this was part of the UTP. But  
20 they're always going to say, Well, I had my -- I had a project  
21 over here, or, I had this other big project over here. Wait a  
22 minute. You know? You've got to -- you've got to get on the  
23 list, you know?

24 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes, yes. Progress made, too.  
25 I think it would be nice to reflect on progress. Okay. Good

1 suggestion. Continue. Epi?

2 MR. GONZALEZ: Yeah, I'm done.

3 HON. JANE NELSON: You're done?

4 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

5 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. One more presentation,  
6 I believe.

7 MS. LAGOS: Yes. Now Pete is coming with Pharr.

8 MR. ALVAREZ: (Speaking foreign language.) Good  
9 morning. I'm Pete Alvarez, Pharr District Engineer. I'm here  
10 to give a brief update of some of the things that are happening  
11 down in the great RGV. This is a slide that demonstrates the  
12 various projects we have identified.

13 You see on the slide we have 200 projects --  
14 total projects. If you look at the number of projects that are  
15 funded, partially funded and unfunded, that actually equals 141.  
16 We need the additional information on the delta, the 59 or so,  
17 from the local governments that we're working with on the  
18 various projects. So our goal is to continue to work with our  
19 partners to ensure that we're providing the resources, working  
20 together to identify the needs and ultimately execute, execute,  
21 execute, like Chairman Buck has told us to deliver the projects  
22 moving forward.

23 Here's a breakdown of the 141 projects, and I'm  
24 not going to read all the numbers, but basically you can see the  
25 various stages that we're in with the various projects, and my

1 goal here is to just speak in general, highlight a couple of  
2 projects, but let me start off by apologizing for switching maps  
3 on you. For the last 10 years, you've been seeing a map that  
4 looks very much like this (indicating), and I've told you I can  
5 talk for hours regarding that map. I changed things up a little  
6 bit --

7 HON. JANE NELSON: No.

8 MR. ALVAREZ: -- changed things up a little bit  
9 to change course. 10 years, it's time for a little bit of a  
10 change, so this map shows green, which means go, funded; orange  
11 -- it should have been yellow, but it wouldn't come out so good,  
12 so orange means pause or caution; and red, it's unfunded, so  
13 we're stopped. Right? The goal here is to identify how can we  
14 basically get the traffic moving forward, and so that's why  
15 there was a little bit of a change here.

16 And, once again, we've been blessed -- Epi  
17 mentioned some of the numbers in Laredo and I think all of us at  
18 TxDOT have been blessed with additional funding coming our way.  
19 In 2017, as an example, the Pharr District total UTP was just  
20 under 600 million. Today we're at 3.6 billion. That's an over  
21 500 percent increase. That's great. It's much needed. We have  
22 had and identified many, many needs there in the Pharr District,  
23 but also in Laredo and El Paso, and I want to commend those  
24 districts for the work that they're doing and we, too, in the  
25 Pharr District continue to push forward to deliver the program.

1                   A couple of things that I wanted to focus on, if  
2 you will, is on partnership and working together with the local  
3 governments. We are blessed to have a now-merged RGV MPO that  
4 understands and has helped prioritize the needs for our entire  
5 region. We also have two regional mobility authorities, Cameron  
6 County RMA and Hidalgo County RMA. They are working very  
7 aggressively to develop regional-type projects in the area. And  
8 then, of course, there is local governments, whether it be  
9 county or city, that are developing projects in their  
10 communities.

11                   One of the major focus, if you will, when we  
12 start talking about project prioritization is how do these  
13 projects affect safety, congestion, connectivity, preservation  
14 of the system, economic development and the environment?  
15 Speaking of economic development, we all know that the border  
16 region, it starts and ends at the border, as they say, and so we  
17 have to be very sensitive to that. Commissioner Meade and  
18 others have brought additional attention to that and we have  
19 taken this initiative very, very seriously and working with our  
20 partners.

21                   When it comes to funding, obviously there's  
22 federal and state funding that's available; there's also local  
23 investment by the various cities and counties and then even  
24 private investment, if you will, in the form of warehousing, as  
25 an example, third-party logistics and things of that nature.

1                   We look at roadways -- right? -- and we talk  
2 about roadway construction being a major player, but we cannot  
3 forget about rail, about transit, about air -- airports, if you  
4 will, et cetera. All of these are important and they're  
5 interconnected one way or another and we need to be open to  
6 these type of ideas. Just this week I met with the City of  
7 McAllen and they're talking about a major project and how  
8 they're going to have various modes of transportation coming  
9 together to ensure that we can deliver the goods.

10                   Operational improvements are also equally as  
11 important. When I'm talking about operational improvements, I'm  
12 talking about those at the ports of entry. We have 14 ports of  
13 entry in the Pharr District scattered all the way from -- from  
14 basically Zapata County -- starts at Zapata county line down to  
15 Brownsville, and our local partners have been investing, if you  
16 will, on those ports of entry. We need to continue working with  
17 the federal government, whether it be border patrol, USDA, US  
18 DOT and others to help expedite the border-crossing situation,  
19 if you will.

20                   Real quickly on grants: There are grants  
21 available and some folks have taken advantage and have applied.  
22 We have received some grants, but in my mind, if you don't  
23 apply, you don't have an opportunity. So let's keep that in  
24 mind, talking -- speaking to the local governments here -- let's  
25 keep that in mind to ensure that we're going after every federal



1 state dollar that becomes available.

2 I have spoke -- talked to you in the past about  
3 the importance of north-south movements, and north-south  
4 movements basically to the Valley or US-281, US-77 and then  
5 US-83 from Laredo to the Valley and so on. These are very, very  
6 important. I've also talked about the movement east-west. Why  
7 is that important? When you start thinking about 14 ports of  
8 entry -- in Hidalgo County alone, there are -- you know, there's  
9 seven, and these ports of entries need to be interconnected one  
10 way or another to the interstate system. So we have been  
11 working aggressively to ensure that we can interconnect the  
12 actual port of entry, the last mile, as they say, to the  
13 interstate so that we can move people and goods.

14 So now a couple of projects that I want to  
15 highlight, and I'm not as good as Epi, I didn't give you a map;  
16 I was going to speak in general. But some of the process that  
17 we have been doing in the Pharr District and our partners is --  
18 you know, the City of Pharr, as an example, is working with a  
19 donation-assistance program, DAP projects. They've been working  
20 on that for many, many years, have developed various -- various  
21 projects, some are currently in construction and some will be  
22 let in the coming years.

23 They've completed a project basically adding  
24 commercial lanes to the Pharr Port of Entry, a \$7.4 million  
25 project that's been completed, and there's other projects that

1 are forthcoming. Anzalduas is currently working -- Anzalduas,  
2 just south of Mission there -- the Anzalduas Port of Entry is  
3 being renovated. They're adding additional capacity as well.  
4 Now the Anzalduas Port of Entry will have the ability to cross  
5 not only empties but now they'll be able to cross fully loaded  
6 trucks. That is huge for the Valley. Right now the bulk of  
7 that -- of those trucks are crossing at the Pharr port of entry,  
8 and that's great, but moving forward, Anzalduas has now been  
9 given authority once this project is completed to be able to do  
10 fully loaded trucks to and from Mexico, and that's going to be a  
11 game changer for the region.

12           Down in the Brownsville area, they're working on  
13 a project at Veterans as well to help that capacity. Why are  
14 all of these things important? In talking to the industry, the  
15 truckers are going to go where there's the path of least  
16 resistance, and that path is time. It may be a longer trip, but  
17 if it saves 2, 3, 5, 10 hours, so be it, they're going to do  
18 that, right? And so we need to focus on the ports of entry and  
19 ensuring that we're developing projects -- I talked about  
20 operational improvements a little earlier, but the whole idea  
21 here is to ensure we're working to provide that expedited  
22 crossing to and from Mexico.

23           A project that's currently in construction is the  
24 365 Tollway. Hidalgo County RMA is working on that project.  
25 It's approximately a \$260 million project that will help

1 interconnect five ports of entry -- and I say five because in  
2 conjunction with what is referred to as the IBTC, or  
3 International Bridge Trade Corridor, these two projects working  
4 together will connect five ports of entry in Hidalgo County to  
5 Interstate 2 and ultimately I-69C and I-69E. That project is  
6 underway; its anticipated completion, September 2025.

7           We are working also to interconnect the RGV to  
8 Laredo -- that's Interstate 2 and US-83. Here recently, as part  
9 of the Ports-to-Plains initiative, we were able to add -- and I  
10 appreciate Commissioner New and Commissioner Alex Meade's  
11 support on this -- to add US-83 South to the RGV to this overall  
12 corridor. The reason that's important is to be able to -- once  
13 again, to be able to move goods.

14           And so we have several projects on US-83, Starr  
15 County, that are currently in construction and we have a couple  
16 that are forthcoming in the near future. And speaking of Starr  
17 County, State Loop 195 -- although it's not US-83, it is the  
18 US-83 relief route, and State Loop 195, that project is  
19 currently in the PS&E stage. We anticipate going to  
20 construction in late 2024.

21           There are three segments for State Loop 195, and  
22 State Loop 195, to give you the -- it's the red line that runs  
23 east-west where it says Rio Grande City. There are three  
24 segments there. The project costs are 60 million, 60 million  
25 and 120 million. These projects will provide relief for a very

1 much congested area in Starr County, the cities of Roma,  
2 Escobares, Rio Grande City and La Grulla will be in essence --  
3 you know, there's approximately 25 signals or so with many, many  
4 schools in the area, school zones and things of that nature.  
5 This relief route will provide connectivity from the RGV up to  
6 Laredo.

7 I'm going to jump over towards Cameron County and  
8 talk a little bit about State Highway 550. State Highway 550  
9 also has a dual designation. Interstate 169 had two gaps. When  
10 we first built State Highway 550, there was two gaps. Gap one  
11 has since been completed and gap two we anticipate going to  
12 construction in late 2024 or 2025. CC RMA is currently working  
13 on that project. That will provide direct connectivity from  
14 Interstate 169E through State Highway 550 or -- or 1 -- IH-169  
15 to the Port of Brownsville. And so that -- that in itself is a  
16 major undertaking.

17 Real quickly, I do want to talk about routes on  
18 US-281 and US-77, and what I mean by that is we have identified  
19 in the UTP -- 2024 UTP approximately \$930 million to do upgrades  
20 to I-69C and I-69E, and these upgrades will once again provide  
21 that connectivity we need north and south to the RGV. 930  
22 million is great, we'll take it. Now we're \$970 million short  
23 for the delta -- right? -- so we're halfway there, and we're  
24 going to continue to work and develop these projects, have  
25 several ready and provide an opportunity for TxDOT

1 administration and TxDOT commission to potentially select those  
2 targets moving forward. And so that is a great investment to  
3 provide that interstate facility and we'll continue to develop  
4 those projects.

5                   So, yeah, 141 projects, and there's some  
6 corrections here, so bear with me a sec as I go through this.  
7 The International Bridge Trade Corridor, real quickly, I forgot  
8 to mention. That project, we were blessed to get an additional  
9 \$150 million of Category 12 funding to -- in addition to the 17  
10 million that was already there. So that project's a \$237  
11 million project. We went through -- we're going through the  
12 procurement stage to hire a consultant, environmental schematics  
13 have been approved and so we're going to jump to the PS&E stage,  
14 and we've been challenged to deliver the project by 2026.  
15 Commissioner Meade and Chairman Buck were in McAllen a couple of  
16 months back, and Chairman Buck made a very strong comment that,  
17 2026 is a long time, let's get it done sooner. So the heat is  
18 on, as they say, so we're going to continue to push forward to  
19 deliver that project.

20                   State Highway 68. So IBTC will connect to  
21 Interstate 2, if you will, there in the Alamo-Donna area for  
22 those of you that are familiar with that. That would be the  
23 green and orange there just west of the Pharr interchange. That  
24 project is fully funded -- the first phase is fully funded where  
25 we'll be able to build many lanes, overpasses and frontage roads

1 from the interstate -- I-2 to FM 1925, a lane for approximately  
2 9 miles. Phase 2 would be from that point north to I-69C north  
3 of Edinburgh to the Edinburgh Airport area. That project is not  
4 funded at this time, but we are looking to continue to develop  
5 that project. Those two projects, IBTC and Interstate  
6 Highway 68, will provide direct connectivity to the ports of  
7 entry -- the ports of entry in Hidalgo County to I-69C.

8 All right. So these are projects that we'll  
9 continue to work on and develop. There is a project that is in  
10 -- identified also as the I-69 Connector that will connect I-69C  
11 to I-69E or US-41 to US-71. Right? That project is right now  
12 in the environmental schematic stage. Why is that important?  
13 That's going to provide, if you will, a relief route for  
14 Interstate 2. Interstate 2 currently has about 160,000 average  
15 daily traffic. Folks, that's equivalent to just south of  
16 Austin, Texas, on I-35. We'll continue to push forward and  
17 develop that project as well. I think I'm getting a signal, you  
18 better hurry up, Pete, and so -- I'm reading between the lines,  
19 Claudia.

20 So we'll continue to work with our partners to  
21 make sure that we develop projects. I do want to real quickly  
22 talk about East Loop in Cameron County. East Loop is a project  
23 that will connect the Port of Brownsville to -- to international  
24 bridges, and that project is being developed by CC RMA. That  
25 will help remove heavy -- overweight, oversized trucks from

1 downtown Brownsville in essence. So I'm going to pause and see  
2 if there might be any questions. Okay. Claudia?

3 MS. LAGOS: Yes, we come exactly with the same  
4 questions, your comments, your inputs? How do you think -- or  
5 how do see all of the projects and the status and the things  
6 that are happening along the Valley and the projects and the  
7 priorities that Pete just mentioned to us? Like, any input that  
8 you can share with us?

9 HON. JANE NELSON: Any input, questions,  
10 comments? Gerry.

11 MR. SCHWEBEL: Thank you, Pete. Gerry Schwebel.  
12 In all of these projects that you're looking at, the green  
13 projects itself -- and this is more -- maybe a question to the  
14 Commissioner: Are you-all considering all of these --  
15 designation of these connectivities [sic] also for overweight  
16 and oversized capacity? Is that included or does that have to  
17 be requested separately or -- in regards to the planning of the  
18 project and the funding?

19 MR. ALVAREZ: So to answer that question, they  
20 would be separate and apart. One thing that we have to keep in  
21 mind when we talk about overweight/oversized, we have to look at  
22 origin and destination. And so obviously if you have a location  
23 let's say within 25 miles from the border, you have an origin  
24 destination, you can potentially designate a roadway  
25 overweight/oversized, but then as they leave the Valley, they

1 will no longer have an overweight roadway to go to, so it would  
2 have to be basically -- the loads would have to be split apart  
3 and what have you. So we are considering overweight/oversized  
4 within the parameters of basically Interstate 2 South to the  
5 border.

6 MR. SCHWEBEL: And the reason I -- this is  
7 Gerry Schwebel. The reason I bring it up is because many  
8 communities, you know, when they start planning there, you  
9 know, some of the growth of their communities is a result of  
10 this highway network, the planning for industrial parks, you  
11 know, needs to be taken into consideration. Let's say, If  
12 you're going to approve this project, understand that you may  
13 not be able -- you may be limited on what you can -- you know,  
14 what you -- who can locate -- who can be there, so that  
15 discussion needs to be had, not just the road but what's going  
16 to be, you know, developing along those corridors and get ahead  
17 of the curve instead of having to then go back and say, Oh,  
18 let's expand this, or, Let's make it X corridor because this --  
19 this prospect or this potential new plan coming in.

20 MR. ALVAREZ: That's a key point, Gerry. Thanks  
21 for bringing it up. Communication is key, the earlier the  
22 better. Sometimes it requires -- or most of the time it  
23 requires legislation to add overweight/oversized corridor, so  
24 let's have that communication early to ensure that we have an  
25 opportunity to address those needs.



1 HON. JANE NELSON: Other questions, comments?  
2 Any questions or comments about any of the three presentations?  
3 Never mind. We still have the El Paso District. I was just  
4 seeing if y'all were paying attention.

5 MS. LAGOS: Yes. Now we have El Paso.

6 HON. JANE NELSON: El Paso.

7 MR. ORTEGA: Good morning.

8 HON. JANE NELSON: Good morning. I wasn't going  
9 to skip over you. I was just making sure they were on their  
10 toes.

11 MR. ORTEGA: Thank you. Good morning, everyone.  
12 I'm Raul Ortega and I'll be pinch hitting for Tomas Trevino  
13 today. And so just jumping right into it, so here we have a  
14 snapshot of our El Paso District. So El Paso District, we have  
15 six counties. Here on this map we show El Paso County only, and  
16 so one of the things that we do want to highlight in terms of  
17 what we have going on in El Paso County is we have five ports of  
18 entries in El Paso County alone, and if you count the  
19 Santa Teresa Port of Entry and the effects that that port of  
20 entry has on El Paso, that'll make six, and [sic] also did want  
21 to highlight the presence of having an Army base there in El  
22 Paso County with Fort Bliss. So a whole lot going on there.

23 So this in the 2024 UTP, El Paso District did  
24 receive \$2.4 billion in terms of our 10-year portfolio, and as  
25 you can see in the snapshot there on El Paso County map, we have

1 a lot going on on I-10. And so I-10 has been definitely the  
2 focus for us in El Paso District since I-10 is the backbone of  
3 El Paso.

4 And so we've already started several projects --  
5 ongoing projects starting from the far west side that connects  
6 the New Mexico state line, and so currently we have a \$200  
7 million project that we have ongoing for a widening, we're  
8 adding the third main lanes on I-10, which is the needed  
9 capacity, and the effects that we see, you know, from the  
10 Artcraft -- I'm sorry -- the Santa Teresa Port of Entry and also  
11 our downtown ports of entries and all of the traffic that is  
12 feeding into I-10.

13 And so one of the things also we're -- we have  
14 focused on is the growth that we have in the eastern portion of  
15 our district, and we've had several widening projects that we've  
16 been able to deliver on the eastern portion of our district, and  
17 again, just due to the growth.

18 We have ongoing corridor studies that, again,  
19 focuses on the eastern portion of our district with our Border  
20 Highway East project and our outer loop. We definitely see the  
21 growth in the partnership that we have with Mexico and the  
22 growth that we're seeing in the Tornillo Port of Entry, and  
23 being able to have that and start the outer loop and the Border  
24 Highway East Studies really will complement all of those efforts  
25 and the growth that we're seeing in the Tornillo Port of Entry.

1                   Here is a zoomed-in El Paso County map of region  
2 priority projects, and really this showcases the partnership  
3 that we have with the El Paso MPO and our local entities, but  
4 here is the four top priority projects that have been identified  
5 in the regional mobility strategy. I will start with the  
6 Artcraft project. As I mentioned early before, the Santa Teresa  
7 Port of Entry has a large number of those wind -- oversized  
8 loads that cross that port of entry, and so being able to handle  
9 that traffic, those windmill blades that come in through that  
10 port of entry, we have a large interchange project, the Artcraft  
11 interchange project, and we're happy to say that it will be  
12 letting in July of 2024. It is a \$200 million project. So  
13 we're really excited to be able to be in position to deliver  
14 that project.

15                   Our Downtown 10 Project. So we conducted -- in  
16 2019, we conducted a 55-mile corridor study, which studied all  
17 of I-10 within El Paso County, and Downtown 10, Segment 2, has  
18 been the top priority project that stands out of that reimagined  
19 corridor study. And so with that being said, we currently have  
20 it in preliminary engineering phase, we have it under schematic  
21 development, it's about 60 percent completed, and we're also  
22 working on the environmental document, which will be an EIS  
23 document.

24                   We do have a target timeline to be able to  
25 deliver that -- or have the record of decision for that

1 environmental document completed by next year in 2024.  
2 Currently that project is funded with \$388 million. We do  
3 have a funding gap of 362 million on that project, so we  
4 currently -- we continue to work with our TPP division in  
5 regards to the next UTP project call in order to continue to  
6 close that gap. We've also partnered with the El Paso MPO to  
7 submit this project for a mega grant -- for mega grant  
8 consideration. So we definitely have our fingers crossed there.

9           The next priority project that I do want to  
10 highlight there is our Borderland Expressway. Our Borderland  
11 Expressway is a relief route to the backbone of El Paso, which  
12 is I-10. Borderland Expressway will serve as a bypass that will  
13 connect -- there's going to be five all the way to the New  
14 Mexico state line. New Mexico will continue their efforts in  
15 their Borderland Expressway and their 213 and their 404 that  
16 eventually connects back to I-10 in New Mexico, and so this  
17 bypass route definitely will be beneficial for El Paso District.

18           Currently we have this project phased out into  
19 three different phases. Phase 1 is already currently in  
20 construction; Phase 2 and Phase 3 -- so Phase 2 is the northern  
21 portion of Borderland Expressway, and we currently have that  
22 under project development under PS&E. It is not funded for  
23 construction, but, again, we continue to work with project  
24 development for Phase 2 and Phase 3. We do have the  
25 right-of-way and the engineering and the stips (ph), so we are

1 moving forward with acquiring the needed right-of-way for this  
2 project.

3           And then Segment 3 is the last top priority  
4 project that has been identified through the MPO's regional  
5 mobility strategy, which is Segment 3, which continues our  
6 mobility efforts on I-10. And so we have not started the  
7 preliminary engineering phase, this project is just outside of  
8 the 10-year window, and as we continue to progress Downtown 10  
9 and Borderland Expressway, this project will move into the  
10 10-year window.

11           Okay. As I mentioned, El Paso District covers  
12 six counties, so the remaining five counties in our district are  
13 rural counties, and part -- part of our project efforts and  
14 project delivery is we do have an energy sector that runs  
15 through Culberson County and Hudspeth County, and so being able  
16 to increase our safety efforts, our rehab efforts and providing  
17 Super 2 passing lanes along US-62 and aiding Hudspeth County and  
18 continuing those efforts into Culberson County.

19           Also we have our Ranch Market -- RM 652 corridor  
20 in Culberson County that we have put a large amount of emphasis  
21 in terms of our rehab, and so we've delivered on those projects  
22 through the energy sector program. We also have a very large  
23 project, our FM 2185 in Culberson County, that we will be  
24 extending 30 miles, which is a \$100 million project, and we are  
25 looking to let that project next fiscal year. So we definitely

1 have been working very closely with Culberson County over there  
2 to be able to provide that -- that project as part of the energy  
3 sector and the Permian Promise.

4           Lastly, you know, within our rural counties, we  
5 do have two ports of entries: We have the Fort Hancock and then  
6 we have the Presidio International Bridge -- I'm sorry -- the  
7 Presidio Port of Entry. So we have completed a pretty enhanced  
8 US-67 corridor study which we've been able to identify the needs  
9 and the future needs of US-67 there in Presidio.

10           Okay. With that being said, we're go into some  
11 status here. So from the Border Master Plan, we have a total of  
12 214 projects that have been in the program and identified, 76 of  
13 those are TxDOT sponsored projects, 138 of them are local  
14 government-sponsored projects. Of those projects, we have 64  
15 that are funded, 12 that are partially funded and 216 that are  
16 unfunded but continue with the project development. 11 projects  
17 have been completed, five are under construction and about 55 of  
18 them are under design or corridor study -- development.

19           Now, I do want to showcase a couple of highlights  
20 here of what we've been able to deliver in regards to projects  
21 that are in the Border Master Plan. And so this project here is  
22 a series of projects that we've been able to deliver in El Paso  
23 District. The Zaragoza Port of Entry is in this -- within these  
24 project limits, and really this -- this project -- or this  
25 series of projects or network here really showcases the

1 partnership that we have with City of El Paso, our Camino Real  
2 Regional Mobility -- Regional Mobility Authority and the El Paso  
3 MPO. So we delivered this project in a total of several  
4 projects that totaled to 121.9 million that we've been able to  
5 deliver, most of which has been already completed in  
6 construction.

7           We do have some mainline efforts ongoing right  
8 now in construction, but this really allowed us to get the truck  
9 traffic off of the many lanes and address that safety concern in  
10 being able to route that truck traffic that goes through the  
11 Zaragoza Port of Entry through the Pan American and Wind Road  
12 route that is highlighted there in yellow. So this project  
13 really showcases the partnership and efforts that we've put into  
14 this area.

15           And here are a couple of construction photos that  
16 are ongoing right now. As you can see, there in the middle is  
17 our efforts of adding that additional capacity, adding that  
18 third lane in both directions of Loop 375 there in El Paso.

19           The next project I did want to highlight is our  
20 I-10 Connect project. This is located in the heart of El Paso  
21 County right where the BOTA Port of Entry is. And so this  
22 project we've been able to complete; we've delivered it at  
23 \$96 million back in November of 2018 when it let, and so I did  
24 want to showcase a couple of completed construction pictures  
25 there.

1                   And so there on the left you can see the actual  
2 connections, and part of the goal of this project was being able  
3 to add the connectivity that was definitely needed from east to  
4 west and west to east there in that area. There in the top  
5 middle really showcased our efforts and everything that we did  
6 to preserve the culture there in El Paso and being able to work  
7 with the public to preserve some of the art that they have been  
8 able to do throughout the years.

9                   Also in the top right we have a picture there at  
10 the port of entry and all of the pedestrian and safety elements  
11 that have been added and enhanced in that area. Prior to that,  
12 you know, we would see pedestrians just kind of walking, you  
13 know, freely in this whole area. In this project, we were able  
14 to provide that safety -- those safety routes and the sidewalks  
15 there near the port of entry.

16                   And lastly, the project that we did want to  
17 highlight that we just completed was the US-67 Presidio  
18 International Bridge. And so this project, we were able to  
19 design and deliver a twin-southbound international bridge there  
20 in Presidio, and this project is already open and in full  
21 operation there in Presidio. Okay. That being said, that's  
22 what I have for y'all today.

23                   HON. JANE NELSON: Now I can ask -- you can ask  
24 first, then I'll ask.

25                   MS. LAGOS: Yes, Madam. Exactly, we come with --



1 we ask for your input. The locals, do you see that we are  
2 addressing the needs? Do you have any extra input to share with  
3 us? Any extra priority that we [sic] think we put it on the  
4 list? Any comment that we want -- you wanted to share with us?

5 HON. JANE NELSON: Here comes the microphone.

6 MR. BARELA: Good morning. John Barela, CEO of  
7 Borderplex Alliance El Paso. Thank you for the presentation,  
8 all three of them. Just a quick and brief comment: We are  
9 seeing an extraordinary amount of large industrial projects that  
10 are looking at El Paso County and have been working with  
11 Commissioner Holguin on many of these projects. The Borderland  
12 Expressway is an absolutely vital part of this plan. It bisects  
13 that prime industrial land that these companies are looking at,  
14 and these are mega projects which would benefit the entire state  
15 clearly and obviously our region. So a quick comment on that.  
16 But I did have one quick question: When will New Mexico be done  
17 with 404 and 213? Do we know? I know they're working on it.

18 MR. ORTEGA: Yeah, I know that they've been  
19 funded for construction already, so they're ongoing. I don't  
20 know when the -- the completion date that they have, but we'll  
21 get back to you on that.

22 MR. BARELA: Okay, because they're under  
23 construction, I thought.

24 MR. ORTEGA: Right, they're ahead.

25 MR. BARELA: Right. Okay. Thank you.

1 HON. JANE NELSON: Other questions? Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. HOLGUIN: Thank you. So the Wind Road  
3 improvements made a tremendous difference with the bottleneck  
4 that we would see near the port of entry, but we still see some  
5 bottlenecking with the trucks. Is there -- are there plans to  
6 expand or do more in the Wind Road area or have we reached kind  
7 of the capacity for Wind Road?

8 MR. ORTEGA: Yeah, so Wind Road is an off-system  
9 street with the City of El Paso, so I have not heard from the  
10 City of El Paso if they will be doing any widening efforts on  
11 Wind Road, but I can tell you this, Commissioner Holguin, is  
12 that when we do finish the construction there on Loop 375, when  
13 we've completed all of the ramp reconfiguration in that area and  
14 completed the third lane in each direction, it will help that  
15 entire operation.

16 MR. GIESBRECHT: This is Jake Giesbrecht from  
17 Presidio, and I just want to say thank you for a job well done.  
18 Beautiful bridge.

19 MS. LAGOS: Eduardo?

20 MR. CALVO: Yeah, this is Eduardo Calvo with the  
21 El Paso MPO. And, Raul, thank you for the presentation and to  
22 the other engineers as well. But I just wanted to put a little  
23 bit of perspective in terms of the strategy that we have for  
24 El Paso County as it relates to the ports of entry. The  
25 projects that Raul highlighted, 375, that's a project that

1 connects the Ysleta-Zaragoza Port of Entry to I-10.

2           The I-110 project that was recently completed  
3 connects the Bridge of the Americas to I-10. The Artcraft State  
4 Highway 178 project that is letting next summer will be an  
5 improvement of a corridor that connects the state of New Mexico  
6 and the Santa Teresa Port of Entry to I-10. So really the --  
7 you know, our strategy really is -- has been at this point to  
8 improve the connections from our crossings to I-10 because,  
9 again, I-10 is our -- is the backbone of our transportation  
10 system. And so now, as Raul showed us, part of our priority  
11 projects are really to improve I-10. So all of the traffic that  
12 is heading from the crossings to I-10, you know, once they get  
13 there, you know, we need to have an efficient way of moving them  
14 through I-10.

15           Again, Borderland Expressway is a wonderful  
16 bypass that is going to help to relieve some of the pressure off  
17 I-10. So I-10, I-10, I-10 is the topic here, right? So I just  
18 wanted to mention that, and I also appreciate the partnerships  
19 that we have with TxDOT, as Raul mentioned. The fact that we  
20 submitted a mega grant partnering with TxDOT for -- to complete  
21 the funding for the Downtown 10 project, which is, you know, a  
22 -- a fairly -- or very large project for our district, so we --  
23 we are very hopeful that we'll get some good news hopefully soon  
24 and at the same time continue the partnership with the TxDOT  
25 administration and the commission to complete the funding for

1 that project as well. So, again, just wanted to mention that  
2 and thank the -- TxDOT and the administration for that, too, and  
3 the Commissioner.

4 MR. STRESOW: Paul Stresow, International Bridge  
5 and City of El Paso. Just to piggyback on your comments,  
6 Commissioner Holguin, once TxDOT finishes the work on that  
7 corridor between Zaragoza-Pan American all the way to I-10 with  
8 the ramp reconfigurations, then we have a study that's coming on  
9 the heels of that to look at the cargo site of Wind Road,  
10 reconfiguring either the approach to our booths there on the  
11 cargo site, but also at the same time with our Mexican  
12 counterparts with the state of Chihuahua, we need to look at  
13 some improvements on that side to get throughput. And most of  
14 the congestion there, besides when there's, you know, TxDOT  
15 enhanced -- I mean -- not TxDOT -- GPS-enhanced inspections, but  
16 when the Mexican system goes down, that affects everybody on  
17 both sides of the border, so we -- we still continue to have  
18 those issues. But, you know, we have plans to look at several  
19 studies for more improvements in that area.

20 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Very good news.

21 MS. LAGOS: Any other comments? That is all of  
22 them, Madam.

23 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you so much, excellent  
24 presentations, all three of them. Now, are there any questions  
25 about any of the three presentations? Thank you so much. And I

1 would like to tell you, Commissioner, that I took a snapshot of  
2 this and sent it to Senator Blanco and told him that El Paso had  
3 an excellent presentation. I also want to recognize that we  
4 have Presidio County Judge Jose Portillo here with us. Welcome.

5 MR. PORTILLO: Thank you, Madam Secretary. I  
6 appreciate what a great show --

7 MS. MAYS: Yeah, it'll work. Just give it a  
8 second.

9 MR. PORTILLO: (Adjusts microphone.) Thank you,  
10 Madam Secretary. Commissioner Meade, to you and all of TxDOT --  
11 Claudia, Caroline -- Jake said in very short words, Great  
12 bridge. It's a game changer for my community. Presidio  
13 unfortunately, of the 254 counties, is the poorest county in  
14 Texas. One of the things that we need is economic stimulus,  
15 development of the area. We're hoping that this is the start of  
16 it. I look forward to -- I know that TxDOT did an amazing job  
17 with the US-67 corridor study. We look forward to the future  
18 projects that are coming, and I look forward to working with  
19 each and every one of you as well. Thank you, everybody. I  
20 look forward to meeting you all in person during the breaks and  
21 seeing you at future meetings. So if I can ever be of service  
22 in Presidio, (speaking foreign language).

23 HON. JANE NELSON: Happy to have you here. Thank  
24 you. Next I would like to recognize Coby Bullard, Senior Vice  
25 President of Sales and Marketing at Canadian Pacific Kansas

1 City, to give us a presentation. Coby?

2 MR. BULLARD: Thank you, Madam Secretary, and  
3 members of this commission. I appreciate it. My name is  
4 Coby Bullard. I am senior vice president of marketing and sales  
5 for CPKC. So we're a newly formed company that was formed by  
6 the merger that was completed in April earlier this year. I'm  
7 going to walk through my presentation and I'm going to start  
8 globally with just what our transaction means, what the new  
9 company creates for North American trade, the big bet we've made  
10 on North American trade and then I'm going to zoom in more on  
11 Texas and what we're doing here for cross-border between Texas  
12 and Mexico.

13 So I will start off by saying I work for a  
14 Canadian company but I'm a fifth-generation Texan, born and  
15 raised here. I've worked in Canada for the last seven years,  
16 but I've commuted from Dallas because my wife wouldn't leave.  
17 So as we've taken on this transaction and our new network allows  
18 me to do work in Texas, I can't tell you how excited I am to be  
19 here, on a personal note. Is there a way to progress this  
20 myself or is somebody else going to do it?

21 TECHNICIAN: (Provides remote.)

22 MR. BULLARD: Perfect. Okay. So just at a high  
23 level, talking about our transaction, we've created the first  
24 transnational single-line railway. So what does that mean? If  
25 you think about the history of railroading, go back to 1869 when

1 Union Pacific drove the Golden Spike in Utah, and what that  
2 really did is that allowed us to connect the East Coast of the  
3 US with the West Coast of the US, and for the last 150 years,  
4 railroads have been focused on primarily east to west trade  
5 within the country.

6 Canadian Pacific drove the final spike and  
7 connected Canada, connected British Columbia with the eastern  
8 parts of Canada in 1885, and did the same thing. When we look  
9 at this transaction -- and you'll see it as I go through the map  
10 later -- we've put together the first single-line haul network  
11 that connects to US, Canada and Mexico with no interchanges and  
12 allows us to flow goods more efficiently through all three  
13 countries. And the reason that we did this is we made a \$31  
14 billion bet on the North American economy and north-south trade.

15 In 2021, we announced the merger with -- between  
16 Canadian Pacific and the legacy KCS railroad, Kansas City  
17 Southern. It was the largest M&A transaction in 2021, and it  
18 was really a decision on our part strategically that as we look  
19 at the North American economy, as we look at through nearshoring  
20 and what was going on from a North American perspective as far  
21 as development of infrastructure and trade, that a North  
22 American north-south focus was needed and really wasn't being  
23 met out there from a rail perspective.

24 So just some highlights. We're a 20,000-mile  
25 rail network, and I'll get into that in more detail here in a

1 moment, and then we have about 20,000 employees in the US,  
2 Canada and Mexico in addition to probably another 3- or 4,000  
3 contractors.

4 So on a high level -- and I don't love this map,  
5 so I'm going to probably go through this real quickly. I've got  
6 a better map here in two slides. But our history: CP was  
7 founded in 1881, KCS was founded in 1887, both railroads long  
8 proud histories. CP, if you look at that top left corner, that  
9 map, you know, that really spans from Vancouver, BC, to  
10 Saint John, New Brunswick, and then it -- the old railroad for  
11 CP terminated in Kansas City. So we were a northern tier of the  
12 continent railroads.

13 KCS, the top of their lines ended in Kansas City  
14 in St. Louis, those Northern two points, and then went all the  
15 way down to Lazaro Cardenas in the Southern Pacific region of  
16 their network. But when you put it together -- and I'm just  
17 going to skip ahead two slides -- we created this new network  
18 now that allows us to connect the entire Canadian economy. It's  
19 recreated a new north-south corridor, and I'll talk about the  
20 investments we're making between Chicago and Laredo and I'll  
21 talk specifically about investments that we're making in Laredo.  
22 But we're creating a north-south superhighway for goods to flow  
23 more efficiently north and south, and I'll explain why that's  
24 important here in a few minutes.

25 Before I get into our network and what our focus



1 is, I want to start by talking -- and as the secretary said, our  
2 best thing and most important thing we do is safety. It's  
3 safety. CPKC is the safest railroad in North America, and the  
4 numbers back it up. If you look at the last 17 years, FRA  
5 reportable accidents or incidents, it's incidents per million  
6 train miles -- it's a regulated factor that's driven by the FRA  
7 -- we've led the industry. We've led all Class 1 railroads for  
8 the last 17 years. We're the only railroad that's ever had less  
9 than a 1.0, so one incident per million train miles. We've done  
10 that twice. We're the only railroad to even get close to that.

11 So when we look at doing business through the state of Texas and  
12 we look at doing business across our entire network, safety is  
13 the first thing we do; we're the partner that you'd want running  
14 through your backyard because we're going to do it the safest.

15           So let's get into the power of the franchise and  
16 what the new CPKC network enables, and it'll allow me to get  
17 into some specific examples of how this new franchise and what  
18 we're doing is going to allow us to create new trade corridors  
19 and more efficient flows for goods and services -- or goods to  
20 move through all three countries.

21           So if you look at our network, you need to think  
22 about the historical view of each of the networks. So if you  
23 look at legacy CP, our network was resource rich. So throughout  
24 Canada, great access to lumber, steel, metals, minerals,  
25 aggregates, big area for natural resources. If you look at

1 Mexico, legacy KCS and their franchise through Texas and the  
2 Southeast, great destination markets. So if you're a lumber  
3 producer in Canada, the number one and number two housing  
4 markets in North America are Dallas and Houston -- you'd want to  
5 be able to get to those markets more efficiently. There was not  
6 a single line haul solution from Canada -- or Eastern Canada  
7 specifically with the Eastern Canadian lumber to come down to  
8 Dallas and Houston and now there is.

9                   And when you look at production and where  
10 production is heading, there's production and investment in  
11 production all throughout North America. There's investments in  
12 Canada, there's investments in the US, there's investments all  
13 along the US Gulf Coast, but there's a lot of money that's going  
14 into Mexico, and I'm going to talk about some specific examples.  
15 But when we look at this franchise and we think about -- we hear  
16 terms like nearshoring. I think it would be good to walk  
17 through one specific example of nearshoring investment and how  
18 pulling together all of the factors of North America makes sense  
19 at this point in time.

20                   So if you look at the new USMCA content  
21 requirement for vehicles, more content needs to come from  
22 North America; you also have higher emission standards. So  
23 you're moving toward more content and you need it to be lighter,  
24 so Aluminum Dynamics has invested -- it amounts that they're  
25 going to invest \$5 billion across North America. They're

1 building a rolling facility in Columbus, Mississippi; they're  
2 building a slab facility in San Luis Potosi.

3           So why does that matter? When you look at this  
4 new network and you think about North America in broader terms,  
5 60 percent of aluminum production for aluminum ingots, which is  
6 the number one feedstock into a slab mill in Mexico, comes from  
7 Ontario and Québec, Eastern Canada. So we're going to move  
8 aluminum ingots from Eastern Canada, single line haul, one  
9 railroad down into the Monterey area; they're going to create  
10 slabs; we're going to move those slabs out of Monterey by rail  
11 to Columbus, Mississippi, all on our network, and they're going  
12 to roll it into aluminum and then we're going to take that to  
13 parts producers -- Tier 2, Tier 3 parts producers and automotive  
14 manufacturers so that they can use it for processes.

15           So when we think about -- we hear people make  
16 comments about nearshoring and we hear people make comments  
17 about why supply chain infrastructure makes sense. This is just  
18 one customer example. They're going to spend about  
19 4-and-a-half-billion dollars over the next 36 months. They've  
20 already got a lot of money in the ground in Monterey, a lot of  
21 money in the ground in Columbus, Mississippi, but it's all about  
22 how do you bring together all of those pieces so that a customer  
23 can put together a supply chain that's sufficient and allows  
24 them to compete.

25           So when we look at the markets we serve, we have

1 really eight core markets. We have Canadian grain, which is  
2 really mostly -- it's grain coming out of parts of Canada going  
3 out for export; US grain, which is actually the biggest  
4 commodity that we move across border between the US and Mexico  
5 with CPKC -- Bartlett is our big partner in this space and we're  
6 moving literally hundreds of cars a day across border between  
7 the US and Mexico for Bartlett bringing grain down. Bulk,  
8 intermodal -- and I'll talk a little bit more about intermodal  
9 here in the next few slides -- energy, chemicals and plastics,  
10 linking together our access with the Alberta Industrial  
11 Heartlands and in the Edmonton area and the Texas Gulf Coast,  
12 US Gulf Coast and all of the refining capacity that's happening  
13 here and then connecting all of that with supply into Mexico.

14 Automotive, I said it on the previous slide, but  
15 we have 30 different finished automotive facilities that we  
16 service in Mexico, US and Canada. So if you think about the  
17 automotive industry and you think, Well, why does it matter to  
18 have a North America north-south railroad? Toyota, Honda, GM --  
19 they're all building in Ontario in Eastern Canada and they're  
20 all building in Mexico, but they're building different platforms  
21 of vehicles at these facilities. So they may build Tundras and  
22 Tacomas in Mexico, but they're going to get distributed all  
23 across North America, so the ability to take that product, get  
24 it distributed more efficiently using rail versus over-the-road  
25 trucking and gumming up 35 worse than it is, allows us to create

1 even better solutions for the automotive industry.

2 Construction [sic] and building products, forest  
3 products, and then our transloads. So we have 254 transloads.  
4 That's warehouses, cross docks, liquids transload, tank  
5 facilities for liquids all across the US, Canada and Mexico.

6 So kind of narrowing in more on how we're  
7 focusing connecting the US and Mexico markets and frankly what  
8 we're doing through Texas and in Texas to facilitate trade  
9 between the US and Mexico markets is we introduced a new single  
10 line haul intermodal product between the US and Mexico. It's  
11 the first and only single line haul intermodal product  
12 connecting Central Mexico to Chicago, Houston and all throughout  
13 the central part of the US. We call it the 180/181 Service.

14 And one of the things that we committed to the  
15 SCB when we went forward with our proposal for the merger is  
16 that we would create new lanes north-south that would take 65-  
17 to 75,000 trucks off the highway, and the highway that we  
18 targeted was I-35, and we commissioned a study and we looked at  
19 it. We started converting traffic faster than we even thought  
20 we would. I don't want to say anything that would make  
21 everybody in the room insiders, but we're doing really well on  
22 converting service on -- in converting the mobile road.

23 But if you look at the four different options if  
24 you're a customer today, you now have CPKC -- so we're averaging  
25 3.9 days from Central Mexico to Chicago on the train. The

1 reason that we're able to do that is -- if you think about --  
2 you know, the last conversation, there was a discussion around  
3 border crossings and delays and congestion at the border  
4 crossings for trucks. You know, the border at Laredo is open,  
5 you know, 16 hours a day versus on the rail, our bridge, we can  
6 cross it 24 hours a day. We totally control that bridge, we  
7 work with CBP, but we have the ability to be 25 -- 33 percent  
8 more efficient in our crossing.

9 We're also able -- you know, you're only able to  
10 inspect so many trucks when you cross. When a intermodal  
11 container comes into our yard in Monterey, 100 percent of the  
12 intermodal containers that are brought in are inspected, we're  
13 pre-sending the shipping information to CBP on all of those  
14 loads, but we're able to create a new product that, in our view,  
15 is a very safe -- maybe safer product to go across, but it's  
16 truck competitive. The most important thing is if you look at  
17 single-driver truck, it takes four days to get from Central  
18 Mexico to Chicago; we're 3.9 days. So we're faster, we're more  
19 cost-efficient and we're safe in the way that we do it.

20 If you look at the old competitive dynamic that  
21 existed before a single line haul solution between Mexico and  
22 the upper Midwest of the US, it was trucks at four days versus  
23 our competition that was at 5.8 days. So they were almost 50  
24 percent slower. So one of the things that we're most proud of  
25 is actually there's new products, the UP Railroad and the BNSF

1 have both introduced new products now to improve the speed of  
2 their products, and it's driven by competition. And we're happy  
3 to see that that's creating more competition, that was one of  
4 the benefits that we publicly said was going to happen as a  
5 result of our merger, and so we're excited to see them bring new  
6 products into the marketplace and frankly to compete because  
7 competition is better for all consumers.

8           And I'm going to zoom in a little bit here on  
9 Texas and reinvestment, and there's been a lot of conversation  
10 this morning around public-private partnerships and funding.  
11 All of these projects that I'm going to talk about are 100  
12 percent self-funded. So if you look at CPKC from a funding  
13 perspective, we put \$30 billion into the transaction up front,  
14 all of that funded in December of 2021. In addition to that, we  
15 spend a little bit over \$2 billion a year in rail size ballast  
16 infrastructure and just keeping up our own network. We're all  
17 -- we're fully self-funded in that perspective. And then in  
18 addition to that, we have projects to expand capacity,  
19 efficiency, create new products and services, and that's what I  
20 want to talk about here on this next slide -- or this next map,  
21 but it's all 100 percent self-funded as well.

22           So right now we have in Q -- well, Q3 2024, we're  
23 expecting to finish an 1150-foot bridge, the second crossing at  
24 Laredo, the second rail bridge, that we're building parallel to  
25 our existing rail bridge. I have on here that it was \$100

1 million, but with a scope creep, it ended up being about \$110  
2 million. But what we're doing in the Laredo region -- and when  
3 I talk about the Laredo region, it's really everything from  
4 Corpus Christi to south of the border is we're putting in \$150  
5 million of investment to more than double the amount of  
6 throughput that we have in that area.

7                   So if you think about a traditional border  
8 crossing for trucks, you have all of these lanes and all of this  
9 infrastructure that's really wide and it goes through a  
10 chokepoint at the border and then you have the ability to kind  
11 of expand back out and handle that throughput. Well, we're  
12 double tracking our bridge, but then on either side of the  
13 bridge, the work that we're doing, we're putting in more tracks,  
14 and we're not just putting in more tracks, we're expanding our  
15 yards on both sides of the border. We're expanding our yard in  
16 Corpus so that we can stage and prepare so that we can  
17 essentially meter our traffic through Corpus and give ourselves  
18 the ability to make sure that we're hitting that border with  
19 trains that are timed so that we can have traffic flowing both  
20 ways as efficiently as possible. But when we finish the bridge  
21 in 2024, the expansion that we're doing, the second span, we'll  
22 have capacity to service the growth that we expect to see over  
23 the next 15 to 20 years with that. So it's going to go through  
24 the rest of my career, create enough capacity for us at that  
25 border crossing and we're excited about that.



1                   But when you think about facilitating trade  
2 through Laredo, it's not just the investment that we're making  
3 at the border and in that border region. It's -- it really is  
4 -- and I keep calling it this north-south superhighway, but it's  
5 putting in -- another \$700 million that we're putting in between  
6 what I would call Beaumont all the way up to Chicago.

7                   And so at the northern end, we -- I have it on  
8 this slide, it's Bensenville, but that's Chicago. It's our yard  
9 just outside of O'Hare Airport -- we actually share a fence with  
10 the O'Hare Airport just there on the south side of the airport  
11 -- but we're doing a \$300 million expansion in Chicago. And the  
12 reason for that is if you're a producer of goods in Mexico or  
13 Texas and you're shipping up into major markets in the Midwest,  
14 most -- from a logistics standpoint, most of that traffic wants  
15 to flow into Chicago and then distribute out from there. So  
16 we're putting \$300 million into a new expanded facility right in  
17 the heart of Chicago and then we're putting in another 275  
18 million in expansion of track between what I would call Beaumont  
19 and Chicago.

20                   So that's new sidings that we're putting in to  
21 allow us to flow traffic better back and forth. We're upgrading  
22 the track -- so rails, ties, ballasts -- so that we can run the  
23 trains faster. So as you improve the track, you can run at  
24 higher track speeds safely, so we're increasing and we're  
25 upgrading the track to higher grades of track so we can run

1 trains faster and continue to improve our product.

2                   One other area. When we think about facilitating  
3 trade through North America, it's having the ability to allow  
4 customers to locate next to a rail. So we have 6,000 acres in  
5 -- across our entire network that's next to our track that we  
6 can work with customers to either put in a new facility that's  
7 directly rail served where we can bring the land in, private  
8 land that we can contribute to the project to help them bring a  
9 new industry, location, transload, multi-modal facility,  
10 whatever they want to do, into one of the regions and locate it  
11 with rail service. So this is a big area for us from an  
12 expansion standpoint.

13                   A good example would be in Dallas. We have three  
14 different sites in Dallas in Greenville, in Garland and then up  
15 in Wylie where we have 600 acres, where we have three different  
16 projects going right now where we're putting in a new automotive  
17 facility in Wylie, a \$60 million automotive facility;  
18 Greenville, we're working with multiple construction-product  
19 customers to land product into Greenville and then distribute it  
20 into Northeast Dallas as they continue to grow; and then at  
21 Garland, we're just -- we're busting at the seams. We've  
22 actually increased the amount of lumber that we're doing into  
23 Dallas by 470 percent in 2023 versus 2022, and really that's  
24 connecting Canadian markets directly with the Dallas market and  
25 moving more efficiently.

1                   Okay. I'm going to just hit on this quickly, but  
2 the ability for Mexican producers to connect efficiently with  
3 Eastern markets is one of the areas, as we've gone through this  
4 transaction and we've learned more about what we need to do,  
5 that's very important. Today there's a -- legacy KCS had a  
6 product called the Meridian Speedway. It was a connection they  
7 had with the Norfolk Southern Railroad in the Eastern US.

8                   We've also recently announced last week it -- it  
9 was approved -- well, it wasn't approved by the STB -- it was  
10 approved to be reviewed by the Surface Transportation Board, a  
11 dual filing between the CSX and CPKC railroads to create a new  
12 interchange and high-speed product through Myrtlewood, Alabama,  
13 but essentially what it's going to allow us to do is if we  
14 produce something in Monterey, it's going to cut out a day and a  
15 half to two days in our ability to deliver that into the  
16 Southeast and into the Eastern markets. So it's a new project,  
17 we're probably a year away from full STB approval, but you'll  
18 see more about that in the news as we move into the future.

19                   So I think I'm pretty much hitting on my time; I  
20 left myself about eight minutes for Q&A. But I'd love to answer  
21 any questions anybody has on CPKC, what we're looking to do,  
22 future investments, any specific areas. I'm happy to dig in.

23                   HON. JANE NELSON: Members? Yes, ma'am. Hang on  
24 for the microphone, please.

25                   MS. MAYS: Just announce your name before you

1 speak.

2 HON. JANE NELSON: Please announce your name and  
3 who you represent before you speak.

4 MS. PEREZ: Vanessa Perez, Mayor Pro Tem, City of  
5 Laredo. Question: Do you-all ship fresh produce? Fresh, like,  
6 you know, agricultural items? And how does that work? Is it  
7 inspected? Is it inspected before or at the border? Would it  
8 be inspected at Laredo? And I'm just -- I'm curious how that  
9 works.

10 MR. BULLARD: Yes, ma'am, we do. So we -- within  
11 our -- so we have 1500 refrigerated containers, 53-foot  
12 intermodal containers, and so we move a lot of protein south out  
13 of the protein patch into Mexico and then we're moving fresh  
14 produce north.

15 So when you think about security from a rail  
16 perspective, think about multiple reams of security that it  
17 creates. So the first is at our intermodal yard. Say it's  
18 being brought into an intermodal yard in Mexico City or Monterey  
19 and they're bringing in fresh produce in a 53-foot container.  
20 We're going to inspect it, we're going to check the seal, we're  
21 going to check the paperwork, we're going to file it with CBP at  
22 that point. It's been inspected at the border, if they want to  
23 pull it out for inspection -- and that's going to be CBP's call,  
24 that's not -- that's not a CPKC call -- and then we'll move it  
25 intact on our rail all the way through the final market, which

1 is typically Chicago.

2 MS. PEREZ: Just clarification: So when you're  
3 moving fresh foods, in that movement, are all of the containers  
4 fresh foods or do you have like fresh goods mixed in with other  
5 goods that are not?

6 MR. BULLARD: Yeah, so we'll have a mix of dry  
7 and fresh goods that could be on the same train. So you would  
8 have a train that would be -- call it 8,000 -- 8500-foot train  
9 and it would have a mix of everything from appliances to fresh  
10 goods.

11 HON. JANE NELSON: Gerry?

12 MR. SCHWEBEL: Thank you. Gerry Schwebel. Thank  
13 you for the presentation. We've been looking forward to getting  
14 an update on this for some time, and I'm glad Mister -- is it  
15 Bullard or Bollard (ph)?

16 MR. BULLARD: Yes, Bullard.

17 MR. SCHWEBEL: Bullard -- Mr. Bullard for your  
18 presentation. Just an observation and then I'd like to ask a  
19 question: On Slide Number 3, you talk about the history. I  
20 would recommend that perhaps you add that one of the major  
21 components of your success in Texas was the acquisition of the  
22 Texas-Mexico railroad from a historical perspective. There may  
23 be some folks even in Texas that may not know that -- about that  
24 railroad and now we're the owners of the first -- of that  
25 railroad, which we have in Laredo, which is over a hundred years

1 old. I think it'd make a great marketing piece for Texas.

2 MR. BULLARD: Yeah, and if I could add just one  
3 sentence to that: The Tex-Mex -- so a gentleman named  
4 Mr. Haverty was the head of KCS back in the '90s when the  
5 Union Pacific and Southern Pacific were going through a merge.  
6 I'm a rail nerd, just so you know. But he -- he had the  
7 foresight -- he owned a route and he only owned the part from  
8 basically here to coming down to here (indicating), but he was  
9 short and he didn't have the Tex-Mex rail line. He didn't have  
10 a way to connect to it, but he went ahead and bought the  
11 Tex-Mex, and he made a bet that as part of the UPSP merger  
12 application that he could convince the STB to give him trackage  
13 rights over the UP. So he made a huge gamble when he did that,  
14 but it's -- it's one of those neat things in the '90s that  
15 people with foresight did some amazing things that have created  
16 corridors that I don't think people, to your point, realized the  
17 history on.

18 MR. SCHWEBEL: So my question is regarding border  
19 representation. I know what your border plan is, I know what  
20 your plans are in Laredo, but just in general, what is your plan  
21 -- what is your representation on the border as you go into the  
22 implementation phase of your \$100 million investment in Laredo?  
23 And how are you communicating with the, I guess, all the  
24 citizens of that project up and down the rail line?

25 MR. BULLARD: Yeah, so Warren Erdman and team

1 were down in Laredo I think about six weeks ago talking about  
2 what we're doing. Our goal is to stay connected to the  
3 community. We do have a strong robust ground affairs team. I  
4 think a lot of it, too, is just even our local operating people  
5 working with local transportation officials and city officials  
6 to make sure that they're communicating what we're doing, but a  
7 lot of it is going to be things like this, and Warren and Kyle  
8 and our team making sure that we're staying connected.

9 MR. SCHWEBEL: I really encourage you to do that  
10 because this is -- it's a lot of planning that's going on here,  
11 the railroads are involved in this and the Border Trade Advisory  
12 Committee, they're a key component of our cross-border agenda.  
13 So your involvement, especially with your planning, is key, and  
14 so, please, I would encourage you to be present.

15 MR. BULLARD: Absolutely.

16 HON. JANE NELSON: Other questions, comments?  
17 Yes, sir? Please identify yourself.

18 MR. CALVO: Eduardo Calvo with the El Paso MPO.  
19 Thank you for the presentation. Specific question regarding  
20 customs, and especially with the Mexican aduanas: What's been  
21 your experience and how do you see that as one of the bigger  
22 challenges in terms of -- now that we have a -- really a USMCA,  
23 you know, rail company, the role of the three different customs,  
24 you know, from Canada, with US and Mexico, but very specifically  
25 on the Mexican aduanas, especially since, you know, recently

1 there's been a switch in who is managing the Mexican aduanas.

2 MR. BULLARD: Yeah, so I would say that we view  
3 it as our responsibility to find a way to work with the  
4 regulators in all three countries' customs, whoever it may be,  
5 to adapt to whatever changes come. And so we -- we've adapted I  
6 think really well as far as working with local officials and  
7 making sure that we're meeting requirements. Our number one  
8 goal is we never want to get into a situation where we have any  
9 regulator that doesn't feel like we're the most trusted partner  
10 that they work with. That's really what our focus is going to  
11 be. I couldn't give you any specifics on good or bad on dealing  
12 with that change. What I would just tell you is we haven't seen  
13 a significant or any major impact to the ability to flow goods  
14 across the border efficiently. So we've been able to work  
15 through that efficiently.

16 MR. CALVO: Thank you.

17 HON. JANE NELSON: Other questions? Yes, sir?

18 MR. ALVAREZ: Yes, Pete Alvarez, Pharr District  
19 Engineer. The City of Mission is pursuing a presidential permit  
20 for a rail crossing, South Mission, the community of Madero.  
21 That crossing could potentially go straight north and hit KCS --  
22 well, the rail line in Hebbbronville. Is there any update on  
23 that?

24 MR. BULLARD: I don't -- I don't have one off the  
25 top, but what I can do is I'll circle back through Kyle and make



1 sure that we get you an update on it.

2 MR. CALVO: Appreciate it.

3 HON. JANE NELSON: All right. Other questions,  
4 comments, thoughts? Going once. Okay. Thank you. Thank you  
5 for your presentation.

6 MR. BULLARD: Thank you very much.

7 HON. JANE NELSON: All right. We're moving on  
8 and we will now hear presentations from the Mexican border  
9 states. The Chair will recognize Devorah Karren, Director of  
10 International Relations, presenting for the State of Nuevo León.

11 MS. KARREN: Good morning, everyone. First of  
12 all, I'd like to thank Secretary of State, Honorable  
13 Ms. Jane Nelson, for having us here, Caroline Mays and  
14 Claudia Lagos and the Border Trade Advisory Committee and all of  
15 your amazing team for the invitation to talk about Nuevo León.

16 As Texas is the best place to live and invest in  
17 business in the United States, Nuevo León is the best place to  
18 do business in Latin America. I come here representing  
19 Samuel Garcia and Secretary Dr. Marco Gonzalez. He apologizes  
20 for not being here and he sends his regards.

21 Where is Nuevo León? Nuevo León is strategically  
22 located in the backbone of the North American market and only  
23 153 miles away from the closest international bridges.  
24 Nuevo León has the second largest metropolitan area in Mexico.  
25 We are currently connecting worldwide with 16 international

1 flights and 37 national flights. Location and connectivity: We  
2 also connect through port, I-35 highway, I-10 highway, Port of  
3 Colombia-Laredo International Border, Ferromex Railroad, Kansas  
4 City Southern Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad.

5 Port Colombia-Laredo is Nuevo León's border with  
6 Texas. It is authorized for the crossing of hazardous materials  
7 among many other benefits, such as the UCP program in which a  
8 single inspection can be made by CBP for the crossing of the  
9 merchandise into the United States. It is also to mention [sic]  
10 great connectivity it has with the major interstate highway,  
11 I-35. Port Colombia-Laredo is always between the second and  
12 third place in land ports in Mexico.

13 Currently 76 percent of Mexican nearshoring is  
14 concentrated in Nuevo León, and Nuevo León will receive 48  
15 percent of Latin America's nearshoring. In Nuevo León, we have  
16 more than 200 industrial parks. We're the region with the most  
17 industrial parks in Mexico. According to the US embassy,  
18 Nuevo León is safe to travel. Nuevo León also has 13 clusters  
19 to promote greater growth and strategic sectors such as  
20 automotive, IT and software, home appliances, aerospace,  
21 interactive media, health, tooling, energy, agrifood, tourism,  
22 housing, nanotechnology and biotechnology.

23 Nuevo León has confirmed 203 investment projects  
24 since October 2021 through October 2023 with 140 investments and  
25 99 expansions in manufacture, IT and software, logistics,

1 machinery and equipment, among others. We have created 250,000  
2 new jobs and a total of \$42.1 billion invested in Nuevo León.  
3 Thank you very much.

4 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. (Speaking foreign  
5 language.) Are there any questions?

6 MR. SCHWEBEL: Gerry Schwebel. I would really  
7 like to see where we stand in regards to progress reported in  
8 regards to the project on the roads that connect to Colombia.  
9 Can you give us an indication of where we stand? When's the big  
10 ribbon-cutting ceremony? Is that in December?

11 MS. KARRIN: Yes, we --

12 MR. SCHWEBEL: And if you could, can you really  
13 clarify whether this is going to be a two-lane road or a  
14 four-lane road? I know we talked about -- you know,  
15 Dr. Gonzalez has presented this before, but where do we stand in  
16 regards to that project? Is it going to be completed on time?  
17 And really, the project itself, what is it going to entail?

18 MS. KARRIN: Yes. Well, we're planning to  
19 inaugurate La Gloria-Colombia Highway at the end of December,  
20 beginning of January, and it's going to be a four-lane highway.  
21 I don't know if that answers your question, and, well, we're  
22 expecting it for January.

23 MR. SCHWEBEL: Are we all going to be there,  
24 Caroline?

25 MS. MAYS: Yes.

1 MR. SCHWEBEL: We're all going to be there?

2 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes.

3 MR. SCHWEBEL: If it's not there in January, what  
4 do we do? We wait.

5 HON. JANE NELSON: Any other questions? All  
6 right. It has been suggested that maybe we take a five-minute  
7 break. Is there -- yeah, everybody's nodding their head, Yes,  
8 yes. We've had a lot of coffee this morning. So with unanimous  
9 consent, we will break for about five minutes, till about 10:50,  
10 I will ask everybody to make it pretty quick, and we'll  
11 reconvene in five minutes with no objection.

12 (A recess is taken from 10:46 a.m. to 11:05 a.m.)

13 HON. JANE NELSON: All right. We're going to go  
14 ahead and reconvene, and while everybody's making their way back  
15 in here, I would like to also welcome Joe McGruder, our Office  
16 of Governor's Economic Development Industry Specialist.

17 MR. MCGRUDER: Yes, ma'am.

18 HON. JANE NELSON: Did I say -- get that title  
19 right?

20 MR. MCGRUDER: Yes, ma'am.

21 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Welcome. We're --

22 MR. MCGRUDER: Thank you.

23 HON. JANE NELSON: -- happy to have you here.

24 MR. MCGRUDER: Thank you very much. Glad to be  
25 here.

1                   HON. JANE NELSON: And I would ask you to give us  
2 a full report, but I'm going to delay that because we are right  
3 on --

4                   MR. MCGRUDER: I can wing it if you want me to.

5                   HON. JANE NELSON: We'll delay that because we  
6 are in the middle of our agenda, but we are delighted to have  
7 you here.

8                   MR. MCGRUDER: Thank you, ma'am.

9                   HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. You want to go  
10 ahead and give a one-minute intro?

11                  MR. MCGRUDER: Sure.

12                  HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Just tell us what you  
13 do, one minute or less.

14                  MR. MCGRUDER: Okay. Hello, everybody. Like the  
15 Secretary said, my name is Joe McGruder. I'm with the  
16 Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism, and what  
17 we do in our office is we work with communities who are -- in  
18 assisting them in providing guidance and direction and support  
19 in their efforts to grow the economy and their industries in the  
20 state. We also work with companies that are looking to expand  
21 into the United -- into the -- Texas, relocate to Texas, pick  
22 up, move the whole thing to Texas.

23                         We also know that it's very important that we  
24 work with our existing businesses in the state of Texas to help  
25 them grow, and our major goal with them is working with them so

1 that we can help them expand basically so they don't expand  
2 someplace else because we want them to expand in Texas. So  
3 thank you very much, Madam Secretary. I appreciate being here.

4 HON. JANE NELSON: Well, thank you for what you  
5 do and what you're going to do. We appreciate you. All right.  
6 So now I'd like to recognize Lenora [sic] -- oh, this is --  
7 Echeverria de Misi. How'd I do?

8 MS. ECHEVERRIA DE MISI: Thank you. Lorena.

9 HON. JANE NELSON: Gotcha. Okay. Our Corridor  
10 Branch Manager at TxDOT to present an update on the I-27  
11 Ports-to-Plains Corridor Analysis.

12 MS. ECHEVERRIA DE MISI: So hello. I am  
13 Lorena Echeverria de Misi.

14 HON. JANE NELSON: She does it --

15 MS. ECHEVERRIA DE MISI: We'll keep on working on  
16 it. Thank you. And so, hello, Border Trade Advisory Committee.  
17 I lead the statewide corridor planning program for TxDOT. I am  
18 so flattered to be here because today -- I'm actually going to  
19 queue up the person that's going to be providing the details,  
20 the briefing today. We are excited about being able to provide  
21 you a high-level overview of the Ports-to-Plains Corridor. So  
22 this corridor, we're currently in the development of an  
23 interstate. It's -- the corridor's been designated by congress  
24 as a future interstate. So future interstates, that's a  
25 long-term proposition.

1                   So we are currently working, TxDOT along with  
2 many, many multiple stakeholders across the state working on the  
3 development of an interstate implementation plan. So we're not  
4 in the study mode, we're actually in the development of our  
5 working with a collective district -- TxDOT districts along the  
6 corridor and we are making some great progress on that. We're  
7 working -- we have a timeline of February, and, again, Cary will  
8 provide more details on the importance of this corridor.

9                   The excitement around this corridor?  
10 International trade component is a major driver on this corridor  
11 as it is a corridor that connects three international trade  
12 gateways of Laredo, Eagle Pass and Del Rio. It connects South  
13 Texas to West Texas and beyond, so not just, of course,  
14 important to Texas but also national and on an international  
15 level. So with that, I will pass it on to Cary Karnstadt. He  
16 is the project manager leading this effort.

17                   MR. KARNSTADT: Thank you, Madam Chair, and the  
18 BTAC members. Good morning, everyone. Appreciate the  
19 opportunity to be here this morning just to kind of give  
20 everyone a brief overview and just kind of an update on our  
21 efforts as far as our Ports to Plains implementation strategy  
22 plan goes. I did want to mention that I know you all have hard  
23 copies of the presentation in your folder. I'll be working on a  
24 slightly different version. We wanted to include some  
25 additional slides that I felt that were fairly important to

1 include, so I will make sure that everyone gets an electronic  
2 copy of that presentation after today's meeting.

3           So we'll go ahead and get started. So the port  
4 studies was designated by Congress as a high-priority corridor  
5 in 1998, and in June of 2019, the Governor signed House Bill  
6 1079 into law requiring feasibility of improving the Ports-to-  
7 Plains Corridor to interstate standards, and in December 2020,  
8 TxDOT submitted the feasibility study report to the Governor and  
9 Texas Legislature, then on June 15th of 2021, the Governor  
10 signed Texas Senate Bill 1474 to establish the I-27 Advisory  
11 Committee to provide TxDOT with information on concerns and  
12 interests along the Ports-to-Plains Corridor and to advise TxDOT  
13 on transportation improvements that would impact the corridor.  
14 So the corridor total population for all 69 counties is  
15 projected to increase by 1,211,288 persons. The overall  
16 corridor population is projected to grow by 61 percent from 2020  
17 to 2050.

18           So total freight tonnage is forecasted to grow  
19 from -- 78 percent through 2050 and that the top county  
20 locations are -- for growth are Webb County, Midland/Ector and  
21 the local (ph) counties. So this slide reflects all freight  
22 loads that are going to and from the Ports-to-Plains Corridor  
23 counties. We've got inbound truck tonnage -- that will be  
24 projected to grow by 73 percent in 2050 -- and then outbound  
25 truck tonnage is projected to grow 89 percent through 2050.



1                   So the Ports-to-Plains Corridor is significant  
2 from a national and international standpoint. The connection is  
3 provided across the United States from Mexico to Canada.

4 Although the Ports-to-Plains Corridor extends from Laredo to  
5 Denver, Colorado, only the portion from Laredo to Raton,  
6 New Mexico, was designated as a future interstate in the FY '22  
7 omnibus appropriations bill.

8                   Some general tenants (ph) in planning the  
9 Ports-to-Plains System in Texas are going to include -- we want  
10 to build from existing interstate highways -- I-20, I-35 -- not  
11 just radiate from existing I-27. Also, we want to avoid project  
12 planning to interstate standards in areas that do not connect to  
13 an existing interstate and must be contiguous. We also want to  
14 avoid federal lands -- to the extent practicable -- military  
15 installations, national grasslands and national recreation  
16 areas.

17                   Also, we want to identify four-lane highway  
18 sections, both undivided and divided, that are also adjacent to  
19 the existing highways for the initial phase of planning and  
20 development, and then also we will try to preserve as much  
21 right-of-way as possible by using the existing right-of-way as  
22 well.

23                   So the purpose of the Ports-to-Plains System in  
24 Texas, interstate implementation plan, is to identify  
25 improvements, short, mid and long term. Short term is

1 considered 2025 through 2028 and then midterm, we're looking at  
2 2029 through 2034 and then long term is 2035 and beyond. Now,  
3 these short-, mid- and long-term timeframes are what TxDOT would  
4 anticipate a project heading for construction. So the  
5 implementation plan will consider lots of mobile travel,  
6 including transit, rail, port, connections and active  
7 transportation including bike and pedestrian travel.

8           So interstate trade is a key component of the  
9 Ports-to-Plains Corridor, and in 2019, these three border  
10 crossings handled 262 billion in trade. 66 percent of  
11 Texas-Mexico cross-border trade, 50 percent of US-Mexico in  
12 cross-border trade, and Laredo took over the Port of Los Angeles  
13 as the top international trade gateway in the United States in  
14 March of 2019 and again in February 2020.

15           Now, at these points of entry, northbound  
16 commercial motor vehicle crossings are forecasted to increase  
17 from 2.6 million to 7.1 million in 2050. So Del Rio and  
18 Eagle Pass are currently not served by an interstate facility,  
19 and I-35 is the only interstate connection to it from Laredo,  
20 and it does not efficiently serve trips headed northwest.

21           Now, the corridor is essential to facilitate the flow  
22 of goods and international trade, which would improve freight  
23 movement from Mexico for all states and it would make freight  
24 movement faster, safer and less costly to trade.

25           So just as an overview of the elements of the

1 Ports-to-Plains implementation plan, TxDOT hosts six listening  
2 sessions in May to inform stakeholders about the project and  
3 solicit feedback. We also have a survey and an interactive map  
4 that was developed through public comment in August. We got  
5 almost 300 surveys on that and almost 350 interactive map  
6 comments were submitted.

7 We worked with TxDOT districts to document,  
8 identify city location studies and determine limits of future  
9 interstate projects related to the Ports-to-Plains System. We  
10 also will be having MPO/RPO workshops in the next coming weeks  
11 and we'll be working with them. We also will be traveling to  
12 Ciudad Acuña for our border alliance workshop where we'll be  
13 working with folks over there just to get an idea of what their  
14 projects are and how it will affect their goods getting across  
15 the border and how it flows into the Ports to Plains.

16 So here's the contact information. You can also  
17 look at resources for information on the Ports-to-Plains System.  
18 You can go to the TxDOT webpage and you can type in  
19 Ports-to-Plains System in Texas, and you'll also find a fact  
20 sheet as well. So I greatly appreciate everybody's time with me  
21 this this morning. I just want to get everybody caught up to  
22 what our efforts are.

23 HON. JANE NELSON: Caroline?

24 MS. MAYS: Yeah. Thank you, Secretary. Lorena,  
25 can you guys, just for the good of the group -- I know we have

1 the information -- what is the program plan on the  
2 Ports to Plains corridor? I know we have that information and  
3 I'm trying to pull it, so to show folks that there is a  
4 significant amount of work going on, you know, within the agency  
5 to develop projects along this corridor to really move it  
6 forward.

7                   So I know Epi presented on some of the Laredo  
8 District side, Pete also presented, yes, that it would go all  
9 the way to the Valley, but really for us now, we're looking at  
10 that entire corridor coming from the Valley. From the Valley,  
11 US-83 plus Ports to Plains to I-10 serves 22 of the 28 border  
12 crossings in Texas, so that's kind of how we're looking at that  
13 entire corridor.

14                   So, Lorena, if you could get that information and  
15 just provide it. If we don't have it now, we can send it to the  
16 group so they can just understand the significant amount of  
17 resources being put. I know Lauren is back there really, you  
18 know, developing those projects and actually some of them now  
19 going to let in those corridors. We have, what, six, seven  
20 districts along this corridor -- the entire corridor? So a lot  
21 of work is going on.

22                   And one of the key foundations for this corridor  
23 being designated as an interstate was supporting border trade.  
24 Very, very significant, and to mention, Secretary, we were in  
25 Coahuila last week, we met with the Governor-elect and this was

1 one of the corridors he mentioned that's very strategic to the  
2 state of Coahuila in terms of, you know, really connecting into  
3 Texas, but also to the US market. So beyond Texas on the  
4 Mexican side, this corridor is very strategic. And he also  
5 talked about what they planned on continuing to do to invest in  
6 the corridors in Mexico that connects to Texas. So I just  
7 wanted to kind of highlight that, that we don't just talk about  
8 things, that things are actually being done to ensure that we're  
9 investing in this, you know, key trade corridor.

10 MS. ECHEVERRIA DE MISI: And also, Caroline, I do  
11 -- right after lunch right in the same room, we are hosting a  
12 meeting with the I-27 Advisory Committee, so we have that  
13 information gathered to provide to them. We're really focused  
14 on the 2024 UTP in terms of construction funding. As we're  
15 getting ready to provide them that briefing, I'd like to, if  
16 possible, maybe provide this information to Claudia because we  
17 kind of have it in the slides for them, and I don't want to  
18 misstate.

19 But definitely overall, again, just to continue  
20 what you just described, Caroline, what we're seeing is a  
21 substantial focus, right? I think that this committee is  
22 critical as well as the I-27 Advisory Committee is leading the  
23 charge on advising TxDOT and guiding on the development of this  
24 long-term proposition, but this committee as well is critical in  
25 that development.

1                   There's a -- as heard earlier, there's lots of  
2 interconnectedness, lots of great infrastructure development  
3 projects, three border districts, and so this corridor really  
4 ties in nicely and there's been a real focus and we see it as in  
5 the 20 -- the recent option which is the 2024 Unified  
6 Transportation Program, which is the UTP document that  
7 essentially authorizes construction funding for these corridors.

8                   So we're seeing, again, just like the various  
9 border infrastructure across the three districts, we're also  
10 seeing a great investment in this corridor in general. So we  
11 would be happy to provide that in more conference -- in a manner  
12 for this committee's consideration.

13                   HON. JANE NELSON: Wonderful. Any questions,  
14 comments? Yes, sir? Wait for the microphone, and then please  
15 identify yourself.

16                   MR. CALVO: This is Eduardo Calvo with the  
17 El Paso MPO. Question, Lorena and Cary: Have you looked at the  
18 connectivity between I-27 and I-10? Because, you know, it just  
19 rubbed me -- like Caroline just mentioned that, you know,  
20 Ports to Plains connects the 22 out of the 28, you know, border  
21 crossings in Texas. The six that are not served by this  
22 corridor are the ones, you know, far west in El Paso -- right?  
23 -- but I'm thinking that, you know, with a -- have you-all  
24 looked at the connection and how that would benefit, you know,  
25 also the ports in the El Paso area, you know, through I-10 or

1 through maybe the US-90 corridor that is also being analyzed,  
2 right? But how can we, you know, look at and see the benefit of  
3 making those connections between the ports in El Paso to I-27?

4 MS. ECHEVERRIA DE MISI: The short answer,  
5 Eduardo, yes, it is being considered. So when we talk -- I know  
6 we were talking about Ports-to-Plains Corridor earlier. That is  
7 the way -- in legislation, it is described -- it is intended --  
8 you know, the expectation, assumption for us is that it will be  
9 an extension of Interstate 27 -- right? -- I-27.

10 And so in order for us to continue to build out  
11 along this corridor and get those shields -- so this  
12 implementation effort that is underway is about getting shields  
13 -- right? What is it going to take for us to get -- right? --  
14 add it onto the system through existing -- you know, the  
15 interstate system, which is federal facilities. So when we  
16 cross Interstate 10, connections into I-35, Interstate 20, all  
17 of that is so important as we think about what the priorities  
18 need to be so that we can connect to those existing interstate  
19 systems.

20 So that interconnectivity, this is a  
21 north-to-south corridor, but it's also really important, the  
22 east-to-west connections, as we move up and down the corridor  
23 north to south. So, yes, absolutely, all of that's being  
24 considered in the development and this implementation.

25 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes, Caroline?

1 MS. MAYS: Yeah. So, Eduardo, the issue that I  
2 want to underscore is that the Ports to Plains as we know it is  
3 federally designated and then the state level. So the corridors  
4 we're working on, our limitation and what's been designated as  
5 interstate is -- is, you know, those different highway  
6 corridors. So that's our limitation.

7 You know, any, you know, ability to look at those  
8 -- we're looking at it broadly, but I would not consider that as  
9 part of the I-27 Ports to Plains designated interstate corridor.  
10 So that's the limitation there. But, certainly, you know, those  
11 are the things that we -- when we look holistically at, you  
12 know, just what you said -- we're looking at, you know, US-67  
13 coming out of Presidio. You know, that also connects to I-10  
14 but also to the Ports-to-Plains Corridor. So there's -- you  
15 know, really when we look at it, we look broader, but with I-27,  
16 we'll limit it as -- you know, on what we can do as TxDOT in  
17 terms of what is designated as the interstate corridor.

18 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes? Let's wait until we get  
19 a microphone back there to you, please.

20 MS. LAGOS: Gerry is ready.

21 HON. JANE NELSON: Wait. We've got a question  
22 back there and then let's -- he hasn't had an opportunity to  
23 speak yet.

24 MR. GARDUNO: Lauren Garduno, Ports to Plains.  
25 Can I make a comment kind of to that topic, Caroline?



1 HON. JANE NELSON: Sure. Go ahead.

2 MR. GARDUNO: So for El Paso, just kind of to  
3 your question, you know, this corridor -- another purpose of the  
4 US corridor is the agricultural impact up and down this  
5 corridor, the movement of agricultural goods up and down it.  
6 Right now you have a port over there in New Mexico,  
7 Santa Teresa, that actually most of the cattle between Mexico  
8 and the US is moving through that portal.

9 So you should start thinking about how you can  
10 connect to areas by 67 out of Presidio. You know, if you bring  
11 some of these connecting corridors over into the 27 corridor,  
12 you know, through the Permian basin -- Raul mentioned he's got a  
13 lot of work going on trying to improve the Permian basin  
14 corridor portions, too -- all of that contributes to pushing  
15 possible future trade over into the Ports-to-Plains Corridor  
16 because that's where right now the bulk of the agricultural  
17 movement is happening today. So that's just another -- you  
18 know, that's another way that El Paso can get involved in -- you  
19 know, the I-27, you know, because of how you move goods, you  
20 know, from -- between Mexico and the US. Does that make sense?

21 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay.

22 MR. GARDUNO: Anyway, that was just it.

23 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. Gerry?

24 MR. SCHWEBEL: Gerry Schwebel. And I just want  
25 to add my -- I serve on the I-27 Advisory Council, and I -- I

1 am fortunate that this commission -- this TxDOT commission  
2 really is seeing the value of the importance of the  
3 connectivity for the border. I just want to say thank you,  
4 Commissioner Meade, because really everything starts at the  
5 border. When it comes to trade for Texas, it starts at the  
6 border.

7           So these projects like I-27, like I-69, the one  
8 that we're working on on 2, they're all driven to connectivity  
9 to the border, and this committee plays such an important role  
10 in making sure that the proper planning that feeds into these  
11 other corridors -- and we've got a great team with Lorena, Cary  
12 and Warren, you know, most of TxDOT as well, so we're fortunate  
13 that we have the right combination of people with experience,  
14 and that's what I value about participating in these meetings.

15           We all need to be more engaged, be more vocal  
16 and making sure that we're all about this experience and how  
17 can we add value so it's a proper planning and coordination to  
18 make it right for Texas, north, south and east, west of the 10s  
19 and the 30s and the 20s and the 45s -- all of those are key,  
20 and how we connect the dots where those intersections [sic] are  
21 key to where we don't have congestion, we have fluidity in the  
22 flow of commerce and trade, that really starts at the border,  
23 the first mile down to the last mile.

24           So I encourage you all to come to our meetings  
25 as well. We have one this afternoon, like you say, Lorena, and

1 it's not closed, it's open, and the more you learn, the more  
2 you can go back to your communities and plan appropriately.

3 HON. JANE NELSON: Good point. Great. Yes,  
4 sir? Hang on. Let's get you a microphone.

5 MR. SEPULVEDA: Good morning. Pete Sepulveda  
6 with Cameron County. We totally support this effort, but just  
7 to remind everybody that the Rio Grande Valley, to this day, I  
8 believe, is still the largest metropolitan area in the  
9 United States without an interstate corridor. So let's think  
10 about completing the funding, the number of segments that lack  
11 on US-77 and US-281 as well because, you know, there's probably  
12 12, 14 international bridges in the Rio Grande Valley, six  
13 airports, three deep water ports, one space port -- now we have  
14 SpaceX there -- that do not have an interstate coming down to  
15 the Rio Grande Valley.

16 HON. JANE NELSON: Any other comments, questions,  
17 input? Thank you. Very good discussion. Good. Thank you very  
18 much. All right. For our final topic, we are going to hear  
19 from Sergio Vasquez, International Trade and Border Planning  
20 Coordinator from the Texas Department of Transportation to  
21 present an overview of House Bill 4422 relating to a study on  
22 enhancing border security outcomes through public safety,  
23 technological and transportation infrastructure improvements  
24 near Texas-Mexico border crossings. Sergio?

25 MR. VASQUEZ: Hello. Thank you, Ms. Secretary

1 Nelson. Can you guys hear me all right?

2 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes, sir.

3 MR. VASQUEZ: Perfect. Thank you-all. Good  
4 morning again. My name is Sergio Vasquez. I'm the  
5 International Trade and Border Planning Coordinator. Thank you  
6 for the opportunity to present House Bill 4422. As I mentioned  
7 in the recap, during the previous Border Trade Advisory  
8 Committee meeting, TxDOT presented a brief overview of the  
9 88th legislative bills that were passed that affected TxDOT, and  
10 today I want to take this opportunity to introduce one and how  
11 Texas is going to implement it over the next year and a month.

12 So for this presentation, I want to introduce the  
13 bill, I want to inform the members of the process that Texas is  
14 going to do to conduct the study and also I want to start this  
15 as an opportunity to begin engagement with the Border Trade  
16 Advisory Committee members and also what the next steps will be  
17 for us to be able to complete this study in a timely manner.

18 So the project overviews: For those of you that  
19 might not know, House Bill 4422 was approved during the 88th  
20 regular legislative session. It was passed by the Texas House  
21 on April 18th and the Texas Senate on May 12th, 2023. Both of  
22 them were unanimously. It was authored by Representative  
23 Terry Canales of Edinburg and Senator Juan Chuy Hinojosa of  
24 McAllen, both representative and state senator is from the  
25 border, and it was signed into law on May 27th, 2023.

1                   So what House Bill 4422 does is it directs the  
2 Department of Transportation to conduct a study on public  
3 safety, border security and transportation infrastructure from  
4 Texas-Mexico border crossings onto the state highway system to  
5 ensure safe, efficient and streamlined commercial motor vehicle  
6 connectivity that amplifies Operation Lone Star efforts.

7                   So as I mentioned, these are briefly the  
8 objectives. The bill itself indicates what TxDOT needs to do in  
9 order to fulfill the requirements, and that is to identify  
10 public safety, border security and transportation infrastructure  
11 needs on the Texas-Mexico border crossings, also how we can  
12 ensure a safe, efficient and streamlined commercial motor  
13 vehicle crossings and how this can amplify Operation Lone Star  
14 efforts. There is a direct requirement for us to focus on  
15 commercial motor vehicle crossings.

16                   Also, the bill indicates that the study that  
17 TxDOT will be conducting has to be done in coordination with  
18 seven organizations or groups, which I will show in the next  
19 slide, and also, as I mentioned, CMV focus and how one can  
20 improve the other when it comes to technology and networks, also  
21 enhancement of transportation infrastructure networks and  
22 funding, and a really important component to this bill is that  
23 TxDOT must submit a written report and study findings by no  
24 later than December 1st, 2024, to the Governor, Lieutenant  
25 Governor and the legislature.

1                   As I mentioned, House Bill 4422 directs TxDOT to  
2     conduct a study with seven representatives, and one of them is  
3     the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Military  
4     Department, Texas A&M Transportation Institute, TTI. It also  
5     indicates that we must work with -- collaboration with law  
6     enforcement agencies near the Texas-Mexico border and also  
7     county government officials. There's no -- there's -- the  
8     county government officials must be at least three noncontiguous  
9     counties on the border or adjacent to counties on the border.  
10    We also need to have a representative from the transportation  
11    industry and an independent nonprofit applied research and  
12    development organization selected by the State.

13                   For the future of this presentation, I'm going to  
14    call this the working group, these seven entities including  
15    TxDOT. At this point, we do not have -- we're in the process of  
16    working on identifying 4 to 7, and how are [sic] we going to be  
17    able to conduct this study in a timely manner and submit the  
18    required summary findings within the allotted time of  
19    December 1st, 2024.

20                   So first I want to provide an overview of who's  
21    going to be working on the study. TxDOT, as the bill directed,  
22    directs and oversees the study and we will facilitate  
23    coordination with partners. My role in this will be a deputy  
24    project manager and my manager, Claudia Lagos, will be project  
25    manager for this, and the bill also requires us to work with the

1 working group, which are the seven entities that were shown in  
2 the last slide, and they will help TxDOT guide the study, advise  
3 on current issues and ensure recommendations are implemented.

4 For this project, TxDOT consulted with two  
5 consulting firms. One of them is WSB, which will be led by  
6 Mr. Joseph Bryan, who's in the back. WSP will lead this effort  
7 and they will provide overall technical and stakeholder  
8 engagement management, they will lead transportation and  
9 connectivity focused tasks and they will integrate findings into  
10 final products.

11 Assisting WSP will be HNTB. That will be led by  
12 Dr. Paula Dowell, who's also in the back. They will lead the  
13 border security and public safety focused tasks. As I  
14 indicated, the bill's really extensive on border security issues  
15 and how it could be implemented on infrastructure, so they're  
16 going to be working together to ensure that we address all of  
17 the points of the house bill. HNTB will also support  
18 transportation-focused tasks and ensure that this is submitted  
19 in a timely manner as required by the bill.

20 So how are we going to do this? First off, we  
21 will start with defining the study guidelines and parameters.  
22 As I mentioned, TxDOT is directed to work with seven members in  
23 the working group. Together we will define what the parameters  
24 are going to be for the study, maybe a certain focus on  
25 certainly commercial vehicles crossings and also look at studies

1 that have been done in the past that might correlate with this.  
2 Once that has been established, we will select border crossings  
3 if needed or maybe inclusion of all 13 border crossings,  
4 determine the three noncontiguous border counties or  
5 representation and other crossings that warrant -- that might  
6 warrant special focus that are decided by the working group.

7           Once that has been completed and the study  
8 guidelines have been established, we'll focus on analyzing  
9 current transportation routes. This will -- I'm just going to  
10 provide these really briefly, but this will review and  
11 characterize border region roadway networks, establish a  
12 baseline for photography capturing the state (ph) and examine  
13 how the Operation Lone Star network features [sic] that might  
14 enhance or provide enhancements to border security and public  
15 safety.

16           We will also focus on threat detection and  
17 identification. If possible, we want to analyze the Operation  
18 Lone Star data, conduct a gap analysis, which includes  
19 collecting data on threat diversion (ph) to Mexican states,  
20 compare Operation Lone Star data to our interview findings and  
21 threat diversions for Mexico and document gaps in terms of  
22 location and plans of operation.

23           In addition to that, once that has been completed  
24 and the recommendations from the working group and TxDOT have  
25 been established, the bill also requires us to identify funding



1 strategies for proposed enhancements. Once that has been  
2 established, we'll be focusing on what type of funding is  
3 available for these type of implementations that we recommended,  
4 and once that's completed, we will submit and finalize the final  
5 report by December 1st, 2024, and throughout this entire  
6 process, we'll be conducting stakeholder and working group  
7 engagement.

8                   So just a brief overview of the project schedule.  
9 As I mentioned, right now we're in the kickoff and guidelines  
10 portion of the study. We expect to conduct the working group  
11 kickoff meeting by the end of the month. As we can see,  
12 Establish Work Group will be completed by November 2023. Once  
13 we have convened the meeting with the working group and the  
14 study guidelines have been completed and approved by all of the  
15 working members, WSP and HNTB will begin the transport route  
16 analysis for the next seven months from November '23 to May '24.

17                   And once we have established all of the  
18 recommendations from the working group and our findings, we will  
19 focus from May to August 2024 on the funding strategies. And  
20 while we conduct the funding strategies overview, we'll begin  
21 drafting a draft report, and this will be the timeline for the  
22 final report finalized by November 31st, 2024, and stakeholder  
23 and working group engagement will be taking place at the same  
24 time.

25                   So who are we planning on working with and who

1 are the stakeholders in this? So we expect to have meetings in  
2 all border districts with binational, national, statewide,  
3 regional and local stakeholders with an interest in cross-border  
4 commercial vehicle movement. Like I mentioned, this bill is  
5 really extensive. It not only includes transportation but it  
6 also includes a border-security component. So we want to make  
7 sure that we reach out to border-security partners, technology  
8 providers, CMV service providers, industry organizations, bridge  
9 operators and MPOs, and this will be defined once the working  
10 group has convened and decided what the study guidelines will  
11 be. And something that's important for this, a binational  
12 collaboration is critical for success in this.

13                   And just an overview of how we're going to be  
14 meeting: The working group is going to be meeting bimonthly.  
15 We expect to have about 12 sessions in addition to select  
16 interviews, maybe with some law enforcement agencies, and also,  
17 if possible, we want to provide briefings for BTAC members  
18 quarterly and also for the Texas Trade Advisory Committee.

19                   Here on this slide is just some potential  
20 locations for meetings. This includes maybe El Paso,  
21 Brownsville, McAllen, Laredo, Eagle Pass and Del Rio. As I  
22 mentioned, the bill focuses on commercial motor vehicle  
23 crossings. You might see that there's limited commercial  
24 vehicle crossings on the map, and that's just because at the  
25 moment there's no capabilities and it's being used for

1 southbound movement of empty trailers, and it might be good for  
2 us to consider looking at that for logistic value and for the  
3 good of correlation and connection, but that's still going to be  
4 decided by the working group once they convene at the end of the  
5 month.

6 Besides that, what are the next steps? Like I  
7 mentioned, we expect to convene the working group at the end of  
8 the month, complete the assembly of study material, existing and  
9 ongoing studies, data sets and network that will guide the study  
10 and also commence stakeholder engagement. We want to begin  
11 interaction with Border Trade Advisory Committee members in your  
12 region, so you might be hearing from us within the next couple  
13 of months seeing if we can meet with you guys or receive your  
14 input on what's going on in your region and also begin the  
15 transportation route analysis. With that, here's my contact  
16 information. You can also contact Claudia or just contact  
17 Caroline and Mr. Bryan for WSP. Sir?

18 HON. JANE NELSON: A lot of questions. Go ahead.  
19 Identify yourself first, please.

20 MR. LIBSON: Yes, Morris Libson with -- in this  
21 case with the Eagle Pass-Maverick County Economic Development  
22 Alliance. I noticed that a part -- a very important part of  
23 this is border security, and one thing that we would like to ask  
24 in Eagle Pass is to -- when you work on this committee, if -- we  
25 would surely like to be involved in it, Eagle Pass, and we'd

1 like to bring another observation that I think is very important  
2 because it kind of will link in with I-27 eventually.

3           What is important to our border security is that  
4 stretch from Eagle Pass to Laredo, and as you know, the -- right  
5 now you can drive from Eagle Pass to El Indio and a little bit  
6 past that, but I think there's just about 40-something miles  
7 left before you can connect with Laredo.

8           But one of the concepts that I want to bring to  
9 the attention of everybody is when you look at I-27 coming down,  
10 I think, if I see it correctly, up around Midland-Odessa, it  
11 kind of splits, something similar to what I-35 does in  
12 Fort Worth and Dallas. I-27 will come to Eagle Pass then head  
13 to Carrizo Springs and then go from 83 into Laredo. We'd like  
14 to see -- it's very essential to our border security to see a  
15 split there where from Eagle Pass you could go either to Carrizo  
16 or you could go to Laredo down the river. So I think that our  
17 border patrol agents and everybody has a really hard time with  
18 that stretch of land that -- from there being no road there.

19           MS. MAYS: So I can respond to that. Thank you  
20 for those comments. Those are the things that we want to hear.  
21 As part of this bill, you know, the charge is to look at the  
22 transportation network and how it supports border-security  
23 operations and DPS is part of that. So, you know, all of that,  
24 when we get into the study, Eagle Pass is going to be  
25 represented, but those are the things that I want, you know,

1 you-all to bring up not necessarily as part of Ports to Plains  
2 but as part of how can transportation facilitate border  
3 security.

4 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Other questions? Yes,  
5 sir? Identify yourself, please.

6 MR. ALDRETE: Rafael Aldrete with Texas A&M  
7 Transportation Institute. So the question I have, Sergio, is  
8 the scope of the project is on the end at connections to the  
9 ports of entry and locations -- you know, transportation  
10 networks in and around the ports of entry but not in between the  
11 ports of entry; is that correct?

12 MS. MAYS: Okay. I will answer that again. When  
13 it comes to the legislative bills, we have to focus on what is  
14 outlined in the bill. So our scope is limited by that. We  
15 cannot bring other stuff, we cannot scope creep, we cannot say,  
16 We think, we should -- that -- we stick with the language of the  
17 bill, what we're tasked with doing. So, unfortunately, that's  
18 not what the bill says. The bill says connectivity. So, again,  
19 that's the challenge we have, good or bad.

20 MR. ALDRETE: And that's the question I had. I  
21 just wanted to clarify that it's only for connectivity.

22 MS. MAYS: Yes, yes, exactly. That's what the  
23 bill asked us to do.

24 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Yes, sir?

25 MR. BARELA: Madam Secretary, Jon Barela, CEO of

1 Borderplex Alliance. Quick suggestion, Sergio, just to -- in  
2 the stakeholder section here to add economic development  
3 organizations to the list. Very often chambers of commerce have  
4 a separate scope, EDOs have a separate scope and of course I  
5 think the economic development organizations will provide  
6 valuable input to this. Thank you.

7 MS. MAYS: Jon, yeah, unfortunately the bill does  
8 not tell us to include economic development as part of the  
9 stakeholder working group, but the broader outreach, we will do  
10 that. Sergio mentioned binational, but as part of the working  
11 group or the core group, what you see here is what was  
12 identified in the bill, and we've got to, again, stick with that  
13 core group that was identified, but we will still do a lot of  
14 engagement.

15 MR. BARELA: Thank you.

16 HON. JANE NELSON: I'll just do a postscript:  
17 You need to tell those legislators they should have included  
18 economic development. Yes, ma'am?

19 MS. PEREZ: Vanessa Perez, Mayor Pro Tem, City of  
20 Laredo. Just a quick question: Since these are going to be  
21 bimonthly -- right? -- two times a week -- two times a month --  
22 or --

23 MR. VASQUEZ: For the working group.

24 MS. PEREZ: For the working group. Are they  
25 going to be virtual or in person only or is it both?

1 MR. VASQUEZ: That is to be defined. More than  
2 likely, we're going to start virtual.

3 MS. PEREZ: Is that in the bill?

4 MS. MAYS: I knew someone would say that. No, we  
5 will use every stakeholder engagement strategy available at our  
6 disposal to meet the intent of the bill. The bill doesn't  
7 dictate how, but since we're looking at the entire border,  
8 certainly, you know, some virtual components will be necessary  
9 but also we're going to need to do in person, on the ground, to  
10 understand, you know, a lot of the issues that are very unique  
11 to the three border regions even to the border crossings because  
12 they are asking us to look at the different border crossings.  
13 So, yeah, we'll do, you know, whatever it takes to meet the  
14 legislative intent of the bill.

15 MS. PEREZ: Okay. Great. I just wanted to  
16 suggest maybe a hybrid because it's a little easier. It's hard  
17 to travel two times a month, and especially if we want to  
18 increase cooperation, I think the virtual would be helpful and  
19 I'd like to make sure that Laredo's included in that as well so  
20 we can make sure that we contribute to the research and the  
21 work, too.

22 MR. VASQUEZ: Thank you for your comment.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's bimonthly, not twice  
24 a month.

25 MS. MAYS: Yeah, it's bimonthly.

1 HON. JANE NELSON: Bimonthly.

2 MS. MAYS: Yeah, it's -- it's bimonthly. Yeah,  
3 it's bimonthly. And one thing I want to -- you know, the team  
4 talked about the working group. I really would like you-all --  
5 the cities, the counties -- to help us with the law enforcement  
6 piece, who are the right law enforcement in your communities for  
7 us to include in that because that's not an area that we as  
8 TxDOT have worked with extensively in our work efforts, so we  
9 just need your help there. That's a big component that was  
10 outlined. It didn't tell us how many, but we want to make sure  
11 it's a good representation on the right law enforcement in your  
12 regions to be able to be at the table.

13 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Other thoughts? Yes?

14 MR. CALVO: Eduardo Calvo with the El Paso MPO.  
15 And hopefully you don't yell at me, Caroline, by asking this,  
16 but I'm thinking about the impact or the role that industry  
17 plays in security as well. We see that because of the extended  
18 wait times for whatever reason -- we do see that some of the  
19 industries that are enrolled in like the CTPAT, you know,  
20 programs, which are really geared towards enhancing, you know,  
21 safety and security, because of those extended times, they  
22 haven't really seen the benefit of staying in those programs --  
23 right? -- and, of course, you know, it's -- we're talking about  
24 the efficient movement of vehicles across the border but at the  
25 same time enhancing the security. So my comment is really to --



1 I hope that these programs and the impact that the  
2 border-security measures have are also thought from the  
3 perspective of the industry that are already enrolled in these  
4 programs.

5 MS. MAYS: No, absolutely, because you can't  
6 achieve the intent of the bill without looking at all of the key  
7 players. The users are the ones being impacted by whatever  
8 decisions we make as public-sector providers of the  
9 infrastructure. So, yeah, certainly that's going to be a key  
10 part of the outreach and get their input and feedback because  
11 they also have ideas and solutions.

12 Because -- and like most of the bills, this one  
13 asks us to provide recommendations to the legislators on what  
14 should be done to address border security. Yes, yeah, so a  
15 little bit different than previous bills. So, again, that will  
16 be very, very important, and to all of you as BTAC members, you  
17 need to provide us input on that as well, and we're engaging you  
18 because, you know, you-all and Representative Canales was  
19 recognized from a trade perspective. You-all are a big  
20 component of who advises the legislators and who advises the  
21 Governor and TxDOT Commission as well. So really your input as  
22 we go about doing this study is important, but when it comes to  
23 BTAC, a lot of it's going to be, Okay, we're reporting back on  
24 what we heard or -- you know, and then kind of get your feedback  
25 efficiently that way.

1                   HON. JANE NELSON: And having been there, if they  
2 ask you for recommendations, take them up on their offer.  
3 Really. Okay. Any other comments, thoughts, questions? Thank  
4 you.

5                   MR. VASQUEZ: Thank y'all.

6                   HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you very much. All  
7 right. Well, thank you all for your excellent -- truly  
8 excellent presentations today. Your hard work and dedication  
9 truly is appreciated. So I'm going to open up the floor for  
10 discussions. Any outstanding issues or questions or feedbacks  
11 or thoughts on future topics for this committee to discuss at  
12 our next meeting? Gerry, question, comment?

13                  MR. SCHWEBEL: Yes.

14                  HON. JANE NELSON: You're recognized. Yes.

15                  MR. SCHWEBEL: Thank you, Madam Secretary. This  
16 will be Gerry Schwebel for the record. Madam Secretary, I'd  
17 like to ask my colleagues in the BTAC to -- we've all been  
18 engaged in the BTMP, many of us -- all of us have been working  
19 with the BTMP to look at the spirit of BTMP that was approved  
20 two years ago in which would identify these projects that we've  
21 been talking about, infrastructure projects. Within the scope  
22 of those projects that were set up in the BTMP as high-priority  
23 projects were a number of port of entries and infrastructure  
24 projects that included new bridges or expansion of existing  
25 bridges. And we -- many communities that those projects were

1 presented in the BTMP and went through the whole process of  
2 making sure that we got consistent support, what we would like  
3 to see is that perhaps this body should submit a letter of  
4 support for those projects that are -- that have filed  
5 applications for presidential permits and seek support from this  
6 entity or this body to support those projects as they go through  
7 the application process.

8           These projects -- some of these projects -- in  
9 fact, I think all of the ones that we've been working on, a lot  
10 of them, with the addition of a new project in Eagle Pass with  
11 Puerto Verde are key -- critical projects for everything that  
12 we're talking about right now. So a letter of support from this  
13 body with your leadership will show that the state of Texas is  
14 behind what now has become a critical component at -- at  
15 Congress. Senator Cruz, in a bipartisan initiative, has moved  
16 forward to push for these -- approval of these presidential  
17 permits, and I know that we have, you know, Javier Salinas here,  
18 Senator Cruz's office, and he's been taking the lead. It's  
19 bipartisan, members of Congress in the legislature as well as  
20 senators supporting these Texas projects, and they've been  
21 delineated in several letters of support from private and public  
22 entities.

23           So I don't know if perhaps this would be the  
24 entity that we would like to request consideration for a letter  
25 of support of the initiative of Senator Cruz that is bipartisan

1 on behalf of the state of Texas and on behalf of this body. I  
2 think everyone in this room knows what I'm talking about or do I  
3 need to break them out? Morris has done a good job of talking  
4 about it already.

5 HON. JANE NELSON: I am advised that BTAC can't  
6 send a letter; however, as Border Commerce Coordinator, which I  
7 am, I can send letters -- right?

8 MS. MAYS: Yes, you can, yes.

9 HON. JANE NELSON: I can do whatever I want --  
10 and if, as chairman person of this group, if this committee  
11 chose to do what you're suggesting, I think there's a way to do  
12 it. And, you know, I would certainly want a discussion to take  
13 place about whether this committee wanted to do what you're  
14 suggesting, but I think there's a way to do this. I think if a  
15 letter was drafted and the members of this committee signed a  
16 letter that I, as Border Commerce Coordinator, wrote on behalf  
17 of the committee -- walk with me on this -- that I wrote on  
18 behalf of the committee that I chaired and sent, I think it  
19 could be written in such a way that I was speaking on behalf as  
20 border trade -- as Border Commerce Coordinator, I'm speaking on  
21 behalf of a committee that I chair representing, if you-all  
22 choose to make that decision, and I'm going to let you -- I'm  
23 good at appointing people to do this -- to draft the wording of  
24 this, and I would certainly expect you-all to read the wording  
25 of this before anybody agreed, but I think everybody understands

1 what Gerry is suggesting. And if you would allow him to  
2 extrapolate a little bit on that and we'll discuss it, and if  
3 you-all want to sign this, I would be happy as Border Commerce  
4 Coordinator to send a letter, but I don't think it's acceptable  
5 for this committee to send the letter. That was a long way of  
6 answering your question.

7 MS. MAYS: Yeah, can I just add a little bit,  
8 Secretary?

9 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes.

10 MS. MAYS: So what Secretary mentioned is this  
11 committee is an advisory committee. You can advise the  
12 Secretary, advise the commissioner, advise the legislature,  
13 advise the Governor that this is the right thing to do for  
14 Secretary or whoever to send the letter, you know, on behalf of  
15 the border communities about border crossings, but BTAC as a  
16 body is as an advisory body to all of the folks I mentioned and  
17 cannot send a letter out. It has to be recommended to the  
18 Secretary and then the Secretary would draft a letter or whoever  
19 -- you know, if Commission Chairman Buck sent a letter.

20 You know, so, yeah, Chairman Buck sent a letter a  
21 couple of months, yes, it wasn't inclusive and that's what  
22 Gerry's point is, it didn't say the entire Texas-Mexican border,  
23 new projects, so I think that's where he's coming from. But,  
24 again, long story short, you guys can advise for, you know, the  
25 Secretary to recommend, she writes a letter and then she would

1 do that as BTAC.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Gerry, you have homework.

3 Do it well.

4 MR. SCHWEBEL: Not the first and won't be the  
5 last. But let me -- I really would encourage everyone's support  
6 because that's what we're all talking about here. We're talking  
7 about border infrastructure for the border, we've identified  
8 projects that are included in these and all the other projects  
9 that we'll be developing through the course of -- as the BTMP  
10 takes more life. I just want to make sure that -- sometimes --  
11 you know, there has to be -- there has to be -- there's always a  
12 way, there's always a way, and those precedents have been set.

13 But we're supporting here now an initiative, and  
14 we have to go a different route than what, you know, is the  
15 process right now, and thanks to the leadership -- bipartisan  
16 leadership, quite frankly, you know, and kudos to Senator Cruz  
17 and Congressman Cuellar. You know, that's on a bipartisan  
18 basis. They see the importance of all of these projects where  
19 they have actually gone on a limb and are really going out there  
20 and saying, We need to get these permits approved now. We can't  
21 wait two years, we can't wait 20 more years for these projects.  
22 They need to be approved now. And I don't know why it takes so  
23 long to think about it. For me, it's a no-brainer of support,  
24 and let the bureaucrats figure out what they have to do to get  
25 it done.

1 HON. JANE NELSON: Yep.

2 MR. SCHWEBEL: So that's what I'm saying, and I'm  
3 asking if anybody has any opposition to this, I'd like to hear  
4 it from you-all, but I think it's clear for me what the message  
5 is, Madam Secretary.

6 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes. You had a comment, too.

7 MS. PEREZ: Vanessa Perez, Mayor Pro Tem. I just  
8 want to thank everybody, Madam Secretary, for allowing me to be  
9 here, also with Ms. Mays, Commissioner, and everybody in the  
10 room. I serve at the pleasure of the mayor and my term is going  
11 to be up soon, so I probably won't be at too many of these  
12 meetings, but I appreciate the dialogue and the participation,  
13 and anything that we can do to help in Laredo -- and I also want  
14 to throw out there that if -- we're stronger together -- right?  
15 -- like our border communities, and we in Laredo are also  
16 looking at alliances for petitioning for water-infrastructure  
17 projects and things. So if anybody along the border is  
18 interested in projects like that, I would love to talk to you,  
19 and you can always find me or any of the councilmembers in  
20 Laredo. We're always willing to work with you-all, and I just  
21 want to thank you again for letting me talk and having me here  
22 and all of your work.

23 HON. JANE NELSON: Awesome. Thank you. Okay.  
24 Before we move off of Gerry's recommendation, let me make sure  
25 -- first of all, I'm going to ask if anybody has any objections.

1 I'd like to hear them. Wait. I see a hand. Do we have an  
2 objection? Okay. Go ahead.

3 MR. MCGEE: I don't want to say it's really an  
4 objection, but I just want to make sure that in the letter of  
5 support it's not written in such a way that excludes anybody  
6 else's project or attempt to get a presidential permit. We're  
7 not against any project in general, but at the same time, we  
8 don't want it to be where this committee is supporting something  
9 at the exclusion --

10 HON. JANE NELSON: At the exclusion of something  
11 else.

12 MR. MCGEE: -- of somebody else's project.

13 MR. SCHWEBEL: If I can respond to that. The  
14 actual action is to accelerate the process of permitting and  
15 granting of presidential permits. That's what this legislative  
16 initiative is. It doesn't target any specific project. This is  
17 for all projects that require presidential permit -- that have  
18 presidential-permit applications present and, for that matter,  
19 even in the future. There's a process, and that process needs  
20 to be accelerated, not delayed, and that's the -- that is the  
21 spirit of these letters that the permitting not be delayed  
22 because of the needs that are currently in place right now.

23 So it's a question of -- not a question to say I  
24 want to approve all of these projects. There are, you know,  
25 four projects not even in Texas, yes, but in general the whole



1 issue, the thrust of the letter is that the permitting process  
2 be accelerated, and those pending applications that are there  
3 right now, that they be approved under the legislature.

4 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Let me ask -- we can  
5 take this one of two ways: I can ask for a recommendation on  
6 behalf of the committee, in which case it would take a vote --  
7 well, I mean, I need a vote anyway. I can either in my letter  
8 speak on behalf of the committee or I can gather signatures one  
9 by one or I can just blanket speak on behalf of the committee,  
10 but I need to ask for votes. So, Gerry, since you came forward  
11 with this recommendation, would you like to make a formal  
12 recommendation?

13 MR. SCHWEBEL: Gerry Schwebel. Thank you, Madam  
14 Secretary. I'd like to make a motion that we ask for you as the  
15 coordinator to submit a letter of support to the initiative of  
16 Senator Cruz for the acceleration of the permitting of these  
17 pending applications and any future applications that we submit  
18 on behalf of the state of Texas.

19 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. Do we have a second?

20 MR. SEPULVEDA: I'll second.

21 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. State your name for the  
22 record, please.

23 MR. SEPULVEDA: Pete Sepulveda.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I make a comment?

25 HON. JANE NELSON: Well, we've got a motion and a

1 second. You'll have to wait to comment until we vote now.

2 Okay. It's been moved -- or we need -- did you get that through  
3 a microphone? We have to have you say it in a microphone. I'm  
4 sorry.

5 MR. SEPULVEDA: Pete Sepulveda, I second the  
6 motion.

7 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. It's been moved  
8 and seconded. All of those in favor of the motion, say aye.

9 BTAC MEMBERS: (Collective) Aye.

10 HON. JANE NELSON: Anybody opposed, say nay.

11 BTAC MEMBERS: (No response.)

12 HON. JANE NELSON: Okay. The motion has  
13 unanimously approved. Okay. Now, you had a comment, sir?

14 MR. GARIBAY: Ruben Garibay with Puerto Verde.

15 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes.

16 MR. GARIBAY: In my experience, which has been  
17 very intimate with the -- involved in getting the -- this bill,  
18 you know, with Ted Cruz and Henry, the amount of signatures that  
19 this committee could produce carries a lot more weight than just  
20 one signature. When they see all of these people that are  
21 directly involved and their positions and their role, with  
22 members, it carries a lot more weight. So that was really my  
23 only recommendation. I think it's a great idea. Thank you.

24 HON. JANE NELSON: Well, you know what? I think  
25 it'd be pretty impressive is the fact that it just passed

1 unanimously, too, so yeah. Good suggestion, though. Okay. So  
2 -- yes, sir, go right ahead.

3 MR. ALDRETE: Thank you very much.

4 HON. JANE NELSON: Wait for the microphone.

5 MR. ALDRETE: Real quickly, now that we are  
6 talking about support, I wanted to, on behalf of TTI and my  
7 current and former colleagues of TTI, I wanted to thank  
8 Secretary Nelson and your staff, Caroline and TxDOT, the BTAC  
9 members and others in the room who supported the organization  
10 and the conduction of the Better Border for a Better America  
11 Conference in September in El Paso. We -- you supported us as  
12 speakers, participants and sponsors, and it was -- the  
13 conference was a success and it was really thanks to the support  
14 that we got from all of you. Thank you.

15 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. Yes, sir?

16 MR. MEADOR: Stan Meador with Texas Pacifico.  
17 Just a quick comment on the meeting format we've done here in  
18 the last little while as we've moved past COVID, and I just want  
19 to say that I've really enjoyed us moving these meetings in and  
20 out of Austin and I just encourage that. I know that's the  
21 intent.

22 I'll go on further to say that the night before  
23 socials are, I think, very important. I know y'all are, like,  
24 putting on mini conferences just for the meeting, but everybody  
25 seems to be so rushed coming in and leaving the meetings on day

1 of that it's hard to communicate and visit with the different  
2 people that are here, and when we've all gone through the time  
3 and effort to get to these places, having a little more social  
4 time has been, I think, very important and very nice.

5           And lastly, I would say that -- and just throwing  
6 this out, and this may have been tried in the past, but, you  
7 know, we come to these meetings and we see all of these nice  
8 presentations and lots of red and green and orange lines on maps  
9 and stuff, and, you know, I think it would be kind of  
10 interesting at times if we could go out and see some of these  
11 projects or see what's going on on the ground when we're in  
12 El Paso or in Laredo or wherever it might take us. So just  
13 again, not trying to complicate these meetings, but taking  
14 advantage of the opportunities that we have as we move along the  
15 border. So just some food for thought. Thank you.

16           HON. JANE NELSON: And that is beautiful food for  
17 thought. Any other comments? Well, that is an excellent,  
18 excellent transition to my next comment, and that is that  
19 El Paso has extended an invitation to us to hold our next  
20 meeting in El Paso. So unless there is an objection, the chair  
21 recommends that our next meeting be held on February 20th in  
22 El Paso. And I'm going to listen for any objection to that, and  
23 without objection -- I'm not hearing any -- our next meeting  
24 will be on -- wait. I'm hearing an objection?

25                           (Crosstalk.)

1 HON. JANE NELSON: No, El Paso didn't object. In  
2 fact, I got a response from Senator Blanco already to my post  
3 that I sent him, and he's already making great plans. So mark  
4 your calendars right now. Yes, ma'am?

5 MS. HOLGUIN: I just have a question.

6 HON. JANE NELSON: Wait for the mic. We've got a  
7 couple of questions, comments.

8 MS. HOLGUIN: Do I need to say my name?

9 HON. JANE NELSON: Well, tell us your name and  
10 then go ahead.

11 MS. HOLGUIN: Iliana Holguin. For this letter  
12 that the motion just passed --

13 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes.

14 MS. HOLGUIN: -- we're not members of the BTAC,  
15 but can we do -- like, Dr. Marco, can he do his signature as a  
16 support, too?

17 HON. JANE NELSON: I don't think so. Yeah, I  
18 think a separate letter would be wonderful, but I think  
19 officially -- well, officially, the letter has to come from me  
20 as Border Commerce Coordinator anyway, so -- but I think his  
21 letter of support would be marvelous, yes.

22 MS. HOLGUIN: Okay. Thank you.

23 HON. JANE NELSON: Yes. I saw another hand.  
24 Yes, sir?

25 MR. CALVO: Eduardo Calvo with El Paso MPO. No

1 objection. Quite the contrary. We would love to host the next  
2 BTAC meeting in El Paso. We hosted one -- what was it? -- a  
3 year ago or whenever it was. Excited to have everybody out  
4 there. We really, really enjoy, you know, hosting you-all, and,  
5 you know, just a shout out here to Commissioner Meade as well.  
6 He visited the El Paso region back in -- was it late August? We  
7 appreciate that. So we're more than happy to do that.

8 We'll probably be able to report some really cool  
9 things that are going on in El Paso. Right now we're probably  
10 out of time, but, you know, as you know, there is a \$600 million  
11 budget to renovate the Bridge of the Americas, so we're in the  
12 process for -- of that. You know, that's GSA, the General  
13 Services Administration is completing the -- the enhanced  
14 feasibility study, as they call it now, and we'll be moving  
15 forward to the alternatives analysis -- a more formal analysis  
16 of alternatives. So we could probably talk a lot about that.  
17 There's really cool things that are going on.

18 HON. JANE NELSON: Very good. I know a list of  
19 about 15 restaurants that I'm very familiar with. Yes, sir?

20 MR. MCGEE: Madam Secretary, I guess in closing,  
21 for 2024 for the meeting of this committee, we'd like you to  
22 consider the other EP in Eagle Pass. Never been there. Well,  
23 you've been there.

24 HON. JANE NELSON: I've been there, but yes.

25 MR. MCGEE: So we'd like for you to take that

1 into consideration. Thank you.

2 HON. JANE NELSON: Thank you. Any other  
3 comments? It has been a really fun meeting. I can -- again, I  
4 want to thank everyone here, and this has been a marvelous  
5 facility. The staff here has been wonderful. Thank you for  
6 hosting. The presentations have been wonderful. It's always  
7 good to see all of our friends. Any other business? Thank you  
8 TxDOT for your hard work. Thank you everybody for  
9 participating. Do we have a motion to adjourn?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indicating.)

11 HON. JANE NELSON: I hear one. Is there a  
12 second?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

14 HON. JANE NELSON: I have two seconds. All in  
15 favor? Anybody opposed? No. Hearing none, this committee is  
16 adjourned to our next hearing in El Paso. Thank you all so  
17 much.

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(Whereupon, the meeting was concluded.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE  
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
BORDER TRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
NOVEMBER 9, 2023

I, Patrick A. Stephens, Certified National Court Reporter, hereby certify that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties in the action in which this proceeding was taken, and further that I am not financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Certified to by me on this 13th day of November 2023.

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\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

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