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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BORDER TRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

IBC BANK ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, BOARD ROOM
2418 Jacaman Road
Laredo, Texas 78041

APRIL 20, 2023
8:35 A.M. to 12:34 P.M.

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A P P E A R A N C E S

1

2

3 BTAC COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT AND PARTICIPATING:

4 Secretary Jane Nelson, Chair

5 Alvaro "Al" Arreola Rolando Salinas

6 Rafael M. Aldrete Eduardo A. Campirano

7 Eduardo Calvo Warren Erdman

8 John Esparza Gerardo "Gerry" Schwebel

9 Jake Giesbrecht Cameron Walker

10 Sam Vale Roberto Tinajero

11 Marga Lopez Juan Olaguibel

12 Victor Trevino

13

14 ALSO PRESENT AND PARTICIPATING:

15 Honorable Susan Harper Caroline A. Mays, AICP

16 Morris Libson Dr. Marco Gonzalez

17 Maria Angelica Granados Bob Dahlke

18 Ninfa Cantu Tano Tijerina

19 Claudia Lagos Galindo Sergio Vasquez

20 Roy Lavcevic Gregorio Canales

21 Hector Lozano Ramsey Cantu

22 Gene Lindgren Roberto Rodriguez

23 Martin Alcala Salgado

24 * * * * *

25

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1 On the 20th day of April, A.D., 2023, between the

2 hours of 8:35 a.m. and 12:34 p.m., the above entitled

3 meeting came on for discussion, and the following

4 proceedings were held:

5 SECRETARY NELSON: The time is 8:35 and I

6 would like to call the second Border Trade Advisory

7 Committee meeting of 2023 to order. (Spanish spoken)

8 Laredo, Texas.

9 (Applause.)

10 SECRETARY NELSON: (Spanish spoken.) I am

11 Jane Nelson, Texas Secretary of State and chair of BTAC.

12 I'm so glad to see all of you here with us this morning

13 to discuss the importance of the Texas/Mexico Border

14 Region.

15 The Texas/Mexico Border Region is the

16 heart of the North American economy. Being one of the

17 most important economic regions in the world comes with

18 many challenges but also many opportunities.

19 These opportunities enable the spirit of

20 the North American economy to reach its full potential

21 and positively impact the region's development by

22 increasing efficient trade, developing quality

23 infrastructure, creating job opportunities and improving

24 the quality of life for those in the area. Maximizing

25 these opportunities can only be possible with

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5 Recap of Feb. 1, 2023 BTAC meeting 22

6 BTMP Implementation Status Update - Expansion of
the Border Wait Times System 28

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8 Nearshoring impact along the Border Region

9 Roy Lavcevic 29

10 Lic. Gregorio Canales 43

11 Hector Lozano 49

12 Regional Infrastructure Planning Efforts

13 Dr. Victor Trevino 64

14 Judge Tano Tijerina 67

15 Rolando Salinas 74

16 Ramsey Cantu 78

17 Al Arreola 92

18 Gene Lindgren 102

19 Epi Gonzalez 110

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21 Mexican Border States Presentation

22 Dr. Marco Gonzalez 132

23 Lic. Maria Angelica Granados --

24 Morris Libson 145

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22 * * * * *

23

24

25

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1 bi-national integration by uniting both sides of the

2 border through culture, cooperation and commerce. It is

3 essential to have a North American vision where a

4 philosophy of boundaries becomes the impetus for

5 cooperation and collaboration and -- and accomplishment.

6 So in recognizing the importance of the

7 North American economy I want to acknowledge a few

8 special guests that we have with us today. And you're

9 all special, I want to say. Including our Webb County

10 officials.

11 Our Webb County Judge -- and please, I

12 apologize in advance if I don't say your name exactly

13 right, but our Webb County Judge Tano Tije- --

14 COUNTY COUNTY JUDGE TIJERINA: Tijerina.

15 SECRETARY NELSON: -- Tijerina.

16 (Applause.)

17 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you, Judge, for

18 joining us. He gave such a warm welcome this morning.

19 County Judge Precinct 3 John Galo is here

20 today. Thank you for coming, John.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: His seat's here; he

22 has not arrived yet.

23 SECRETARY NELSON: He hasn't arrived yet.

24 He's coming.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's coming.



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1 SECRETARY NELSON: He's coming. Okay.
 2 County Commissioner Precinct 1 Jesse
 3 Gonzalez is with us today.
 4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He will be on his
 5 way.
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: He is on his way.
 7 Okay. I'm hitting -- batting one out of three here
 8 today.
 9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I do have a --
 10 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. County
 11 Commissioner Precinct 4 Ricardo Jaime is here with us
 12 today.
 13 COMMISSIONER JAIME: Yeah.
 14 SECRETARY NELSON: Welcome.
 15 (Applause.)
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Mayor Protempore
 17 Vanessa Perez, District 7, is here with us today.
 18 Vanessa is here with us.
 19 (Applause.)
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: They're all parking. I
 21 know this.
 22 Let's see. Council Member District 8,
 23 Alyssa. Alyssa? Is she --
 24 MS. CIGARROA: I'm here.
 25 (Applause.)

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1 SECRETARY NELSON: I am amazed that she's
 2 not home working on her wedding because she's getting
 3 married very soon. I interviewed the guy last night.
 4 He's awesome. Congratulations, by the way.
 5 MS. CIGARROA: Thank you.
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: That is so exciting.
 7 Council Member District 3, Melissa R.
 8 Guerrero, is with us today as well. Thank you for
 9 coming. She's probably planning the wedding.
 10 We have from Maverick County today Rolando
 11 Salinas, Mayor of Eagle Pass. And Mav- --
 12 (Applause.)
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: And Maverick County
 14 Judge Ramsey Cantu.
 15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's on his way.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: He's on his way.
 17 Traffic -- you know, it's understandable.
 18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's all due to
 19 traffic.
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: I was going to say
 21 that. Traffic with all this --
 22 Okay. From Val Verde County we have Mayor
 23 of Del Rio Al Arre- --
 24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Roll the Rs.
 25 Arreola.

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1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Arreola.
 2 SECRETARY NELSON: I'm working on that.
 3 Thank you. Welcome.
 4 (Applause.)
 5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You thought mine
 6 was hard.
 7 SECRETARY NELSON: And we have a few
 8 people here today representing both the United States,
 9 and Texas elected officials. Representing our United
 10 States Senator John Cornyn we have Ana Garcia, regional
 11 director. I don't see her.
 12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Parking.
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: She's parking.
 14 Okay. On behalf of the United States
 15 Representative Henry Cuellar we have Jose Saun
 16 (phonetic). He's parking.
 17 Okay. And representing Texas State
 18 Senator Judith Zaffirini we have Arlis (phonetic)
 19 Guerrero, District Office Director. Thank you for being
 20 with us.
 21 On behalf of Texas State Representative
 22 Tracy King we have Lupita Zepeda. Just raise your hand.
 23 Canada's -- oh, I know she's here right by
 24 me. Canada's Consulate General in Dallas, Susan Harper,
 25 sitting two --

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1 (Applause.)
 2 SECRETARY NELSON: And I think it's very,
 3 very important that we recognize the fact that BTAC is
 4 our neighbors to the north and south, and, Canada, we
 5 really appreciate Susan being here. Thank you, Susan.
 6 Mexico's Deputy Consulate General in
 7 Laredo, Martin Alcala.
 8 MR. ALCALA SALGADO: Thank you.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. We are
 10 happy to have you here.
 11 (Applause.)
 12 SECRETARY NELSON: I want to welcome Bob
 13 Dahl- --
 14 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: Dahlke.
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: -- Dahlke -- welcome.
 16 We're happy to have you here Consulate Chief at the
 17 United States General Consulate in Nuevo Laredo.
 18 (Applause.)
 19 SECRETARY NELSON: Welcome. We do
 20 appreciate you making the trip out. Thank you.
 21 Also I'd like to give a special
 22 recognition to federal and state officials from Mexico
 23 joining us here today, including Marco Gonzalez.
 24 (Applause.)
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: I know he's here. The

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1 regional -- Secretary of Regional and Agricultural
 2 Development for the state of Nuevo Laredo and a good
 3 friend.
 4 MR. GONZALEZ: Nuevo Leon.
 5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nuevo Leon.
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: Nuevo Leon. I meant
 7 that. That's what I meant. I was looking down at you
 8 to see you smile. I wasn't looking at my notes. Nuevo
 9 Leon. Yes. We are so happy to have you here, special
 10 friend. Thank you.
 11 We have Maria Granados, Secretary of
 12 Innovation and Economic Development for the state of
 13 Chihuahua.
 14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Parking.
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: Parking. Parking.
 16 Secretary of Economic Development,
 17 Claudia -- Claudio Bres on behalf of the state of
 18 Coahuila.
 19 MR. BRES: Today I'm representing. Morris
 20 Libson.
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: Morris Libson.
 22 And Ninfa Cantu, Secretary of Economic
 23 Development on behalf of the state of Tamaulipas.
 24 (Applause.)
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: Ninfa was one of the

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1 very first people to call me and congratulate when I got
 2 Secretary of State. It's delightful to finally meet her
 3 in person. Thank you.
 4 SECRETARY CANTU: Of course.
 5 SECRETARY NELSON: I want to just -- did I
 6 miss anybody?
 7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Vanessa has arrived
 8 from Laredo.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: My new friend. We are
 10 so happy -- I always love to meet a fellow mama, and
 11 it -- it was such a delight to meet you yesterday.
 12 Thank you.
 13 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: Vanessa.
 14 SECRETARY NELSON: Vanessa Perez, we are
 15 delighted to have you here representing our -- our host
 16 city here.
 17 Did I miss anyone else?
 18 Okay. And welcome to -- I -- I would
 19 introduce every single one of you sitting out there
 20 because you are all very special guests. I will tell a
 21 little bitty tiny story. The last time I was in Laredo
 22 was about 15 years ago, maybe longer, maybe 18 years
 23 ago. When we drove in late yesterday afternoon when I
 24 pulled up I could not believe Laredo. Oh, my, it -- it
 25 was amazing and I am very grateful to Laredo, and

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1 certainly to our host bank, for hosting us, but it is
 2 very, very impressive what we are seeing here today and
 3 what I'm sure we're going to learn more about.
 4 So thank you all for being here today. I
 5 want to thank all of you for your partnership with the
 6 state of Texas. It is recognition of the shared North
 7 American vision that we have and, I believe, we have
 8 even more reasons to be optimistic about that vision
 9 than ever before.
 10 So before I call roll, again, I -- I do
 11 want to thank IBC Bank for hosting us today and these
 12 beautiful facilities. I want to begin by giving a few
 13 key individuals who are with us today an opportunity to
 14 provide some brief -- note the word "brief" -- remarks
 15 to the committee.
 16 First, the mayor -- well, no, the mayor's
 17 not here and I believe you're going to give some remarks
 18 on behalf of the mayor. So, Ms. Perez.
 19 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: Okay.
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: You can do this; this
 21 is a piece of cake.
 22 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: Yes.
 23 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 24 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: So I just want to
 25 thank everybody for being here. As you know, border

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1 trade is very important to our city in Laredo. I mean,
 2 we just got designated the number one port in the entire
 3 country overall. So congratulations to everybody for
 4 all of your hard work and -- and helping advance our
 5 community. And, like you said, our community has grown
 6 so much in the past 15 years.
 7 The growth that we expect is probably ten
 8 times more than what you've seen. And we know that the
 9 demand is out there for trade and Laredo is -- is ready
 10 and we're here to work together to see how we can
 11 improve efficiency. You know, there's issues with
 12 supply chain, there's issues with inflation and, you
 13 know, increasing the efficiency of our port city, you
 14 know, we do need some help with that, as far as
 15 arterials, but that's to the benefit of the entire
 16 region, which will benefit the entire country and the
 17 entire world, you know.
 18 So we're looking forward to identifying
 19 problems, finding solutions, seeing how we can work
 20 together for not just today but forever. We want to
 21 work together with everybody forever. So I want to
 22 welcome you-all to Laredo and we hope you enjoy your
 23 stay, we hope that you will continue to come down here
 24 and we'd love to have you -- have more of these meetings
 25 in our city.

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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Very cool. We'd be
2 happy to come back.
3 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: All right.
4 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
5 Commissioner Alvin New?
6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's not here.
7 SECRETARY NELSON: Is not here.
8 Okay. I know who's -- Canadian General
9 Consul Harper is here. Would you like to give some
10 regards?
11 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: Good morning.
12 Bonjour. (Spanish spoken.) It's really an honor to be
13 part of this Advisory Committee because, for me, it is
14 absolutely what the secretary is saying, this is about a
15 North American corridor, and I always like to remind
16 people that in somewhat difficult times all three
17 countries did their own analysis and concluded that
18 individually and collectively working together was
19 creating the jobs and prosperity that we all needed, and
20 we also got it through two parties in D.C.
21 So I think that the leadership that Texas
22 is showing and the secretary, in particular, is showing
23 is extremely important to all of us, and it's really an
24 opportunity for me to underline the pleasure it is to
25 work with the people here in Texas and in the bordering

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1 states of Mexico. Gracias.
2 SECRETARY NELSON: Denada. I'm learning.
3 I'm learning.
4 Let's see. Mexico's Deputy Consul in
5 Laredo Martin Alcala.
6 DEPUTY GENERAL CONSULAR ALCALA: Thank
7 you. (Spanish spoken.) It's a great pleasure to be
8 here with you-all and also to participate in this
9 meeting with the Mexico -- of the Border Trade Advisory
10 Committee.
11 I want to -- to welcome the official
12 Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila and Tamaulipas.
13 I want to take this opportunity to renew
14 the consulate general's commitment to continue
15 contributing to the strengthening of relation between
16 Mexico, the USA and Canada, as well as Texas, Mexico's
17 trade -- number one trade partner with Texas with a
18 total trade of \$231.1 billion in 2021: \$122.7 billion
19 of export and \$108.4 billion in imports.
20 In order to continue growing in this
21 alliance it is important to continue working together
22 with the respect of others over everything and building
23 more physical duties, of course, and, of course,
24 building bridges of understanding and friendship as is
25 the case in the Laredo Region. Thank you.

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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. I would now
2 like to recognize -- oops, would now like to recognize
3 Consular Chief Bob Dahlke from the United States General
4 Consulate in Nuevo Laredo.
5 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: Thank you,
6 Madam Secretary. On behalf of Consular General Kim,
7 it's a pleasure to meet you. Congratulations on your
8 appointment.
9 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
10 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: This is, I
11 believe, our first opportunity to -- to meet with you in
12 person, so nice to --
13 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
14 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: -- to have that
15 opportunity. (Spanish spoken) and to the
16 representatives of our partners just across the border
17 from our consul district, representative of the mayor
18 of -- Mayor Trevino here in Laredo, as well as
19 Mayor Salinas from Eagle Pass and, Mayor Arreola, nice
20 to see you again.
21 In the consulates we are delighted to be a
22 part of this dialogue that goes in our area to do
23 everything possible to advance bilateral trade between
24 two countries and to strengthen this trade corridor that
25 spans the length and breadth of our continent.

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1 Consular General Harper, it's nice to meet
2 you in person. As a veteran of the U.S. Consulate in
3 Montreal I am delighted to have the opportunity to
4 always work with our Mexican colleagues. (French
5 spoken) and we hope this is a great dialogue. We're
6 always happy to use our convening power on the other
7 side of the border in Nuevo Laredo to welcome you. So
8 we hope that perhaps in the future we might be able to
9 do that at the U.S. Consulate in Nuevo Laredo.
10 By the way, on Monday, April 24th, we will
11 celebrate the fifth anniversary of the opening of our
12 new consulate. I like -- I like to call it our Palacio
13 Consular and Palacio Cologne in Nuevo Laredo. It's a
14 beautiful facility. We hope to see as many of you there
15 soon as possible. Muchas gracias.
16 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes. Thank you.
17 And, finally, I'd like to give our
18 partners from our Mexican boarder states the opportunity
19 to say a few words.
20 First, Secretary Gonzalez from Nuevo Leon.
21 SECRETARY GONZALEZ: Thank you, Madam
22 Secretary. I want to emphasize the necessity of having
23 all of these meetings in a very frequent manner and to
24 point out that Nuevo Leon has always been part of the
25 Port of Laredo. When we always talk about Laredo being

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1 the most important land port for the U.S. Nuevo Leon is
 2 included.
 3 The Port of Laredo had four international
 4 crossings, Colombia is one of them, and we're very happy
 5 to work with Tamaulipas and Coahuila and Chihuahua to
 6 emphasize and strengthen our relationship with Texas.
 7 Governor Samuel Garcia says hi and he's waiting for you
 8 to come to Monterrey very soon. Thank you.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes. Thank you. I
 10 want to hold that baby.
 11 Next, Secretary Granados from Chihuahua.
 12 Oh, she didn't make it?
 13 Okay. Now, Secretary Bres from Coahuila.
 14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good morning.
 15 (Spanish spoken.)
 16 Madam Secretary, it's an honor to finally
 17 meet you, and on behalf of Secretary Bres, he extends
 18 his regards to -- to everyone in representation of the
 19 state of Coahuila and -- and our Governor Miguel Angel
 20 Riquelme Solis, and we -- in Coahuila we are excited.
 21 We're excited with what's coming. And, of course,
 22 border trade, it -- what it is in Piedras Negras in
 23 Eagle Pass, and Ciudad Acuna in Del Rio is -- we're --
 24 we're going to grow very, very fast here.
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.

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1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And we are
 2 extremely proud of the job that has been done in
 3 Coahuila -- with the security in Coahuila, and it is
 4 something that is one of our main attractions for -- for
 5 our border and we're just very glad to be here.
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: We are so happy that
 7 you are here.
 8 And, finally, and I am so happy I get to
 9 meet Secretary Cantu in person. Secretary Cantu from
 10 Tamaulipas.
 11 SECRETARY CANTU: Hello. Good morning,
 12 everyone. Texas Secretary of State Jane Nelson, it's a
 13 pleasure to see you again. We appreciate your warm
 14 invitation (Spanish spoken) distinguished authorities
 15 and dear friends all.
 16 Secretary Nelson made a keen observation
 17 in a recent meeting that Texas benefits greatly --
 18 greatly from a well-maintained transportation and trade
 19 system similar to the health circulatory system with
 20 veins and arteries that facilitates the efficient
 21 movement of goods.
 22 In Tamaulipas we share this vision, and
 23 our governor (a medical doctor by profession)
 24 understands the importance to keeping our commercial
 25 arteries healthy, our minds open, and our hands extended

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1 to our friends and neighbors. We recognize that
 2 together we form a tightly knit region where each entity
 3 and individual play a vital role. We appreciate your
 4 invitation and extend ours to you to explore and
 5 experience Tamaulipas, the Mexican state with the most
 6 international bridges and a beating heart of the economy
 7 connecting Canada, the United States and Mexico.
 8 Today I am honored to work with
 9 San Tamaulipas and the Texas Department of
 10 Transportation, a crucial institution for economic
 11 development and competitiveness -- competitiveness --
 12 competitiveness in North America. (Spanish spoken)
 13 sends warmest greetings and is committed to building a
 14 bright and prosperous region that offers great
 15 opportunities to our people. Our states and -- and
 16 Texas share a deep productive and commercial integration
 17 that, now, more than ever, it's our prime concern is
 18 timing.
 19 In 2021 trade between Mexico and Texas
 20 exceeds \$231 billion. You may already know that the
 21 42 percent of Mexico's growth trade with U.S. goes
 22 through the Tamaulipas/Texas border and it grew by
 23 17 percent last year.
 24 Thank you very much, and it's a pleasure
 25 to be here with you. Thank you.

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1 (Applause.)
 2 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 3 I will now move to the adoption of the
 4 minutes from the February 1st, 2023 Border Trade
 5 Advisory Committee meeting that we held in Austin. I
 6 hope everyone has had the opportunity to review those
 7 minutes. And Mr. Schwebel?
 8 MR. SCHWEBEL: So moved.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. And I want to
 10 thank you for being our host again.
 11 MR. SCHWEBEL: You're very welcome.
 12 You're very welcome.
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: Mr. Schwebel has moved
 14 that we adopt the minutes. Is there a second?
 15 SECRETARY CANTU: Second.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. It has been
 17 moved and seconded. All those in favor?
 18 (Aye.)
 19 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Is there any
 20 opposition?
 21 Hearing none, the minutes from the
 22 committee's February 1st meeting are adopted.
 23 Now, I would recognize Sergio Vasquez,
 24 International Trade and Border Planning Coordinator from
 25 the Texas Department of Transportation, to provide a

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1 recap of the February 1st meeting. Eduardo?
 2 Oh, Sergio. Why does it say --
 3 MR. VASQUEZ: Good morning. Can you guys
 4 hear me? Hi. Good morning, everyone. I'm Sergio with
 5 the Texas Department of Transportation. I want to thank
 6 y'all for joining us. Let me give a brief recap of our
 7 last BTAC meeting on February 1st, 2023.
 8 The last BTAC meeting had two main tasks.
 9 First, we provided a status update on the implementation
 10 status of the Texas/Mexico Border Transportation Master
 11 Plan. Second, we provided a status update on two
 12 Mexican border states regional infrastructure projects.
 13 Regarding the implementation of the
 14 Texas/Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan Claudia
 15 Lagos and TxDOT consultants reminded members of the
 16 BTMP's objectives, the importance of the Texas/Mexico
 17 border and its connectivity, and key performance needs
 18 identified in the BTMP.
 19 Ms. Barrios provided background information
 20 on the bi-national connectivity study being provided,
 21 background information on the bi-national connectivity
 22 study being conducted pursuant to the BTMP, including
 23 its purpose and schedule. Ms. Barrios outlined the
 24 study's two main components. The First and Last Mile
 25 Connectivity Study and the Border Crossing Connectivity

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1 Study.
 2 Ms. Barrios noted that First and Last Mile
 3 Connectivity Study identifies key lengths and gaps in
 4 and between transportation networks for all modes in the
 5 immediate vicinity of the border crossings. Border
 6 Crossing Connectivity Study assesses gaps in the
 7 multimodal transportation network between border
 8 crossings.
 9 Paula de Wolf (phonetic) highlighted the
 10 development of a border connectivity network where
 11 stakeholders and -- and technical analysis are
 12 considered to identify the community needs; she pointed
 13 to needs such as improved bi-national collaboration,
 14 multimodal connectivity, system operations, safety and
 15 security, and asset management and design; she also
 16 described the study's approach, stakeholders outreach
 17 and schedule.
 18 BTAC members offered comments and asked
 19 questions regarding the presentations -- presentations
 20 and suggested areas of consideration for the plan.
 21 Andrew Canon mentioned that if you are going to analyze
 22 network connectivity we should analyze the resiliency of
 23 the network as well. Eduardo Calvo added that when
 24 looking at connectivity issues at our ports of entry it
 25 will be necessary to look at how connectivity is

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1 impacted on Mexico's side.
 2 Caroline Mays assured the committee that
 3 just did the analysis of the Texas/Mexico Border
 4 Transportation Master Plan and all the analysis and
 5 implementation phase will be bi-national.
 6 Following an insightful discussion BTAC
 7 members received updates from the Mexican state of Nuevo
 8 Leon and Tamaulipas regarding infrastructure projects in
 9 their respective states.
 10 Secretary Marco Gonzalez of the state of
 11 Nuevo Leon outlined Nuevo Leon's transportation and
 12 infrastructure projects. Secretary Gonzalez outlined,
 13 identified Nuevo Leon's highway expansion projects
 14 involving the Colombia Bridge and a railroad project
 15 with a multimodal railway station.
 16 Secretary Ninfa Cantu of Tamaulipas
 17 emphasized Tamaulipas' commitment to modernizing bridge
 18 infrastructure. Secretary Cantu noted the installation
 19 of the National Customs Agency in Neuvo Laredo and the
 20 modernization of the Nuevo Laredo 3 and Reynosa Park
 21 International Bridges.
 22 Lastly, the committee held an open
 23 discussion regarding future meetings and topics. The
 24 Honorable Secretary of State Nelson thanked BTAC members
 25 and guests for their participation in the meeting.

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1 Secretary Gonzalez and Consular General Harper answered
 2 questions from BTAC members. Secretary Gonzalez
 3 mentioned that when promoting the Colombia port of entry
 4 the state would offer a fiscal incentive for all the
 5 companies that use the port entry which have a tax
 6 address in Nuevo Leon. That way they will receive back
 7 the 3 percent incentive of the labor tax. Consular
 8 General Harper offered to provide information for the
 9 northern U.S. border that might be useful. (Inaudible)
 10 Gold suggested topics for future BTAC meetings,
 11 including an increased dialogue with state agencies
 12 regarding Texas/Mexico border issues and discussion of
 13 federal infrastructure projects.
 14 That concludes the recap of the BTAC
 15 meeting February 1st, 2023. Thank you.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 17 Members, have any questions or comments?
 18 No?
 19 And I neglected to ask that role be
 20 called. So can I ask Caroline Mays to call role for us,
 21 please.
 22 MS. MAYS: Yes. Thank you, Secretary.
 23 And so for members that are here, please
 24 just respond and say yes.
 25 So we'll start with Rafael Aldrete?

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1 MR. ALDRETE: Yes.
 2 MS. MAYS: Okay. And Mayor Arreola, are
 3 you here?
 4 MAYOR ARREOLA: Yes.
 5 MS. MAYS: Okay. Jon Barela? Not here.
 6 Eduardo Calvo?
 7 MR. CALVO: Here.
 8 MS. MAYS: Okay. Eduardo Campirano. I
 9 know he's not here.
 10 Warren Erdman, are you here?
 11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Eddie Alvarez
 12 representing Warren who just stepped out for a phone
 13 call.
 14 MS. MAYS: Oh, okay. Okay. Okay.
 15 John Esparza. I know you're here.
 16 MR. ESPARZA: Yeah.
 17 MS. MAYS: Okay.
 18 Juan Flores? Antonio? Antonio? No.
 19 Okay.
 20 Dante?
 21 Cynthia Reyes?
 22 Okay. Jake?
 23 MR. GIESBRECHT: Yes.
 24 MS. MAYS: Maria-Elena?
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: She's not here.

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1 MS. MAYS: Okay. Iliana Holguin? Not
 2 here. Lisa Loftus? No. She's not here.
 3 Marga Lopez?
 4 MS. LOPEZ: Yeah.
 5 MS. MAYS: You're here. Great.
 6 Stan Meador?
 7 Daniel Mendoza?
 8 All right. Juan Olaguibel?
 9 MR. OLAGUIBEL: Here.
 10 MS. MAYS: You're here? Okay.
 11 You're supposed to be at the table.
 12 MR. OLAGUIBEL: I couldn't find a chair.
 13 MS. MAYS: Well, we have chairs here. So
 14 why don't -- Mario, can you get a seat for him?
 15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.
 16 MS. MAYS: And this -- this Pete -- I
 17 don't think Pete Sepulveda is here.
 18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.
 19 Claudio, the -- Pete Sepulveda is not here
 20 so you can get that chair there as well.
 21 And then Jesus Reyna?
 22 Okay. Mayor Salinas?
 23 MAYOR SALINAS: Present.
 24 MS. MAYS: Gerry Schwebel?
 25 MR. SCHWEBEL: Present.

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1 MS. MAYS: And Daniel Silva?
 2 Tommy Taylor?
 3 Roberto Tinajero?
 4 MR. TINAJERO: Here.
 5 MS. MAYS: Victor Trevino?
 6 Sam Vale?
 7 MR. VALE: Here.
 8 MS. MAYS: Cameron Walker?
 9 MR. WALKER: Here.
 10 MS. MAYS: Secretary, that concludes the
 11 role call.
 12 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 13 All right. Picking back up where we left
 14 off.
 15 I would like to recognize Claudia Lagos,
 16 Manager of the International Trade and Border Planning
 17 Branch from the Texas Department of Transportation to
 18 provide a status update on the implementation of Texas'
 19 Border Trade Master Plan. Claudia.
 20 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: Good morning, Madam
 21 Secretary, and good morning everybody.
 22 Today I would like to present this status
 23 of our Border Wait Time Measuring System. We had the
 24 opportunity to present this program a few meetings ago,
 25 and today I would like -- sorry. And today I would like

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1 just to give you the status of the program and expansion
 2 that we have been doing.
 3 As we mentioned in our previous meeting,
 4 we have -- from the 28 border crossings we have seven
 5 commercial border crossings using this kind of system,
 6 entry passenger-only vehicle or private vehicles
 7 bridges.
 8 Now, with expansion, our intention is to
 9 cover the hundred percent of the bridges and we are a --
 10 moving to install six new commercial vehicles --
 11 commercial vehicle border crossings and 22 private
 12 vehicle border crossings.
 13 It is important to mention, and you can
 14 see it here on the graphic, that the system works at
 15 trying to measure the times since we start getting in
 16 line on the Mexican side -- and -- and this is
 17 important. Now, all the -- the measures that we have is
 18 northbound, and so we start measuring when the vehicles
 19 or the trucks get in line on the Mexican side and then
 20 when they get into the Mexican custom, then into CBP,
 21 and then when they exit and connect with any of the
 22 highways. And we have been working very close with the
 23 new border crossings to install everything in the
 24 regions.
 25 In this one, the -- the next slide is just

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1 to mention that we have been -- continue following or
 2 doing the maintenance and checking the operation
 3 with the -- with the 6 -- 7 border crossings that were
 4 installed. And this is important because, in some
 5 cases, we have sadly authorities try to change and
 6 update the technology that they were using, for example,
 7 getting by to this kind of the FAST vehicle entry, and
 8 so we needed to move to a new technology from our system
 9 because we were not catching or getting the information
 10 from the -- from the vehicles.
 11 And for the second part of the program --
 12 and you will see here on the map, I'm not going to go,
 13 like, border crossing by border crossing, but we can see
 14 here the ones that are already installed, the ones that
 15 are under operations, the ones that are in testing and
 16 the ones that are -- that we are planning to continue.
 17 We have been doing this by several basis and so we are
 18 almost done with the installation on the 22 border
 19 crossings that we're remaining.
 20 Okay. In this one we just conclude the
 21 installation this week on the Los Indios International
 22 Bridge and we start doing the installation in Progreso.
 23 We installed the system in Roma and we continue doing
 24 the installation in Matamoros, and we are moving on
 25 Camargo, Anzalduas, Donna and Progreso.

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1 We have been receiving the support of all
 2 of the Mexican authorities because they need to allow us
 3 on both sides to have the approval of GSA or the similar
 4 agency in Mexico, and we can probably say that for the
 5 next meeting we will report to you that the 28 border
 6 crossings are working and we -- we are tracking all of
 7 the operations northbound.
 8 And the next phase, the big one for this
 9 project, is we are going to start doing the tracking on
 10 southbound. This is very important also for us. We
 11 know that sometimes the city's help us getting the data,
 12 but we want to have it directly from the system and we
 13 are moving for this on the second phase.
 14 And that will be all, Madam Secretary.
 15 If -- I don't know if you have any questions.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 17 Yes. Yes. Go right ahead.
 18 MR. SCHWEBEL: Yeah. I -- I was going to
 19 ask a question in regards to the -- to the measurement
 20 that you have. Like, you're looking at the CBP wait
 21 time, then you have a wait time on the bridge or you
 22 have the -- the crossing time. Is that going to be in
 23 phases? Are you going to take three different
 24 measurements from those sensors going into Mexico and
 25 coming and then coming out, coming into the U.S.?

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1 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: Yes. When we analyze,
 2 for example, a vehicle we start reading exactly when
 3 they enter. And we imagine, for example, here in -- in
 4 Laredo before the -- the booths on the Mexican side that
 5 is where we put the first device. So we are going to
 6 start tracking the vehicles from there, and -- and we
 7 have the -- the -- the ability -- the -- the chance to
 8 check how that far is moving. We are checking also,
 9 tracking the plates and so we can see -- it's not going
 10 to be three different measures. We are going to try --
 11 MR. SCHWEBEL: That's my question.
 12 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: -- since the vehicle
 13 was entering and when the -- the vehicle is exit --
 14 exiting the -- the -- on the U.S. side.
 15 MR. SCHWEBEL: So that's my question. You
 16 know, the crossing time will be measured from the first
 17 sensor on the Mexico side.
 18 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: From one end to the
 19 other end.
 20 MR. SCHWEBEL: One end --
 21 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: Yes.
 22 MR. SCHWEBEL: -- to the other?
 23 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: Yes. And --
 24 MR. SCHWEBEL: And what about with the
 25 FAST -- what about those vehicles that will be allowed

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1 to those trusted shippers that go in the FAST lane, how
 2 are you going to measure those?
 3 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: That -- in that case
 4 we are installing the system in those new -- new line --
 5 lanes. We didn't have it and now we are putting the
 6 system with the new technology that CBP is using for the
 7 tax we are installing the system in those new lanes.
 8 MR. SCHWEBEL: Okay. Thank you.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Gerry, for the record,
 10 we all know who you are, but in case this is being
 11 recorded would you identify who you are?
 12 MR. SCHWEBEL: Absolutely. Thank you for
 13 asking. I apologize. I'm Gerry Schwebel, member of
 14 BTAC.
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 16 Any other questions? No.
 17 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: Question.
 18 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay.
 19 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: I have a question
 20 here.
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: Where are you? There
 22 you are. Thank you. Would you identify yourself?
 23 MR. DAHLKE: Yeah. Bob Dahlke from the
 24 U.S. Consulate in Nuevo Laredo.
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.



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1 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: Thank you,
 2 Claudia, for the presentation.
 3 I'm just curious, as a followup to Gerry's
 4 question, if we take, for example, Bridge 2 --
 5 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: Uh-huh.
 6 MR. DAHLKE: -- in Laredo in terms of a
 7 POV crossing, can you tell us approximately where the
 8 first sensor is located on the Mexican side of that
 9 bridge?
 10 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: It's installed in
 11 between the last exchange place and the first booth.
 12 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: Okay.
 13 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: But it's in -- inside
 14 the city.
 15 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: Yes.
 16 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: It is before the --
 17 the booths. Because we know that a lot of the occasions
 18 we have lines, like, longer than that point. So --
 19 and -- and this is also important to mention because it
 20 has been, in some cases, a challenge, because we need to
 21 have the approval from the city or the authority and
 22 because of the insecurity we have some issues because
 23 the equipment, in some cases, was stole or they vanded
 24 the -- the equipment. So it -- it's really a challenge
 25 because we -- we really need to get, like, a little far

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1 from the first booth to really catch the time that the
 2 vehicle is getting, but we are trying to do it our best
 3 to protect the equipment. It -- And it's not really a
 4 camera. That's -- in some cases the -- the guys that
 5 were installing, they were approached by the -- the bad
 6 guys asking if the equipment was a camera because they
 7 were worried if we were tracking them, too. And so they
 8 needed to explain that it was just a device, and we use
 9 Bluetooth, and it's not -- it's not a camera, it's just
 10 a sensor that helps us to track any -- any device that
 11 you have on the vehicles. And so that's the way that we
 12 are tracking, but it's not a camera.
 13 CONSULAR CHIEF DAHLKE: Thanks.
 14 SECRETARY NELSON: Any other questions?
 15 MR. CALVO: Madam Secretary?
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes, sir. Identify
 17 yourself, please.
 18 MR. CALVO: Hi. This is Eduardo Calvo
 19 with the El Paso MPO.
 20 Just a comment. In -- in El Paso we just
 21 completed a study that actually the Texas Transportation
 22 Institute did for us. And I'm going to put the --
 23 Rafael on the spot. But it was a study where PTI had
 24 available data, commodities data for 2019, and we were
 25 able -- the -- the idea of the study was to look at --

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1 at the -- quantifying the delay, the -- by commodity
 2 types, right? But -- and -- And we can get into that
 3 later and we'll be more than happy to share this at
 4 the -- at the next BTAC meeting because we're finishing.
 5 But one of the important findings was that
 6 they were able to separate at the -- the trucks that
 7 were under the FAST program versus non-FAST, and for
 8 2019 in the ports of entry in El Paso and Laredo the
 9 total crossing time -- and correct me if I'm wrong,
 10 Rafael -- the total crossing time was the same. It was
 11 very similar between FAST and non-FAST, which really,
 12 you know, doesn't seem to be logical, right? Because
 13 the whole idea of the FAST program is to incentivize and
 14 do all of the -- all of the, you know, background checks
 15 and -- and all that.
 16 But what that is telling us is that the
 17 benefit of the FAST program, which is at the inspection
 18 point, you know, reducing that it really gets diluted
 19 because of all of the -- the delays in the other pieces
 20 of the crossing time, right? Especially on the Mexican
 21 side where you have a lot of delays; you have all of the
 22 trucks that are -- that are, you know, fighting traffic
 23 and -- and we don't have the opportunity to line them up
 24 correctly on the appropriate lanes, right? So that --
 25 that was, you know, one of the really interesting

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1 findings.
 2 And, you know, anecdotally I've heard from
 3 many shippers in -- in -- in -- in El Paso and Cuidad
 4 Juarez that say, well, you know, we don't really see the
 5 benefit of -- of enrolling in FAST, right, because --
 6 you know, because of the -- it takes so much time to get
 7 through the FAST lane.
 8 SECRETARY NELSON: Uh-huh.
 9 MR. CALVO: Once you get to the
 10 inspection, yeah, it's really easy and fast and
 11 efficient for you. So, again, it's -- it -- it helps us
 12 focus on where some of the improvements need to happen
 13 and -- and which individual crossing. So we'll be more
 14 than happy to share that -- that report once we are
 15 finalizing.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Fascinating. Thank
 17 you.
 18 Other comments? Questions?
 19 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: Madam Secretary.
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: Go ahead. Yes.
 21 MS. LAGOS GALINDO: We are also including
 22 that part, Eduardo, in this system. We have been
 23 working with CBP and we are trying to find how they
 24 define the lanes. And we all know that probably you
 25 have, like, regular lanes and at some time or at some

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1 hour of the day they switch it and they change from
 2 regular traffic to Ready or CB Pop (phonetic) or SENTRI
 3 and we are trying to identify with them the way to track
 4 exactly the lanes that are being used as CB Pop or Ready
 5 and compare with the regular ones.
 6 And it's a little -- probably it will be a
 7 little difficult because everything will depend on the
 8 communication that we receive from CBP and when they
 9 share with us the times and the number or the -- the
 10 lane that they are switching, but we are trying to put
 11 that -- that's -- that's a key element that we are
 12 analyzing on the system because it -- definitely we want
 13 to have the information not just like the measurement of
 14 how long it takes to cross but depending on what kind of
 15 traffic are you.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Sure. Sure. Good
 17 info. And good info to share. Yes. Thank you.
 18 Other questions? Comments?
 19 Well, Claudia, thank you. You've been
 20 very helpful. Keep us updated.
 21 All right. Now, I would like to recognize
 22 Roy Lavcevic from the Secretary of Economic Development
 23 of Nuevo Leon; Gregorio Canales -- is it DIMSA?; and
 24 Hector Lozano from DICEX Logistics to present on the
 25 Nearshoring Impact Along the Border Region study.

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1 Gentleman? I hope those are all --
 2 MR. LAVCEVIC: Good morning, Secretary
 3 Nelson. To members --
 4 SECRETARY NELSON: And I apologize for all
 5 of the mistakes I just made.
 6 MR. LAVCEVIC: To members of this
 7 committee and everyone who is attending this meeting.
 8 I will do a quick overview of the economy
 9 of Nuevo Leon, what happened in the last years and what
 10 is our expectation for the next one, those related with
 11 the new investment and nearshoring.
 12 SECRETARY NELSON: And you're -- tell us,
 13 you're Roy?
 14 MR. LAVCEVIC: I'm Roy at the -- from the
 15 Secretary of Economic Development of Nuevo Leon.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay.
 17 MR. LAVCEVIC: So Nuevo Leon -- and
 18 Monterrey is the capital of Nuevo Leon, we are located
 19 150-200 miles from -- from the border. We are the
 20 second largest metropolitan area in Mexico with a
 21 population of 5 million, a total 5.7 million in our
 22 state.
 23 Our overview of the economy, we generate
 24 8 percent of the GDP of the country with only 4.6 of the
 25 population. The last data of growing is 6.1 economic

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1 growing compared with the national average that is 4.8.
 2 We have 78 higher GDP per capita compared with the
 3 national average. We hold 9.7 of total manufacture
 4 production of the country. Also we have the
 5 9.87 percent of national export of the country. We are
 6 the first place nationwide in the new job -- jobs added
 7 and also in the foreign direct investment.
 8 Last year in foreign direct investment we
 9 grossed 33 percent, it's an amount about \$4.4 billion
 10 U.S., the 87 percent of this foreign base is in the
 11 manufacture sector. And we had accelerated growth in
 12 the last two years in our exports.
 13 As you can see in the graph, the last year
 14 we grow 23 percent, and in 2021 we grow 20 percent. We
 15 think this will continue in the next two or three years.
 16 One-third of our exportation is in the automobile
 17 sector. Where they came from, this growth, the last two
 18 years? They came from USA.
 19 As you see in the -- in this graph the
 20 blue line is the total export and the black line is the
 21 export to the United States. The other lines that's
 22 remaining flat is the rest of countries. So all of this
 23 growth came from the USA. Maybe that's not good for --
 24 for us in terms of the diversification, but what I want
 25 to show this is that we require more infrastructure to

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1 get to USA in order to hold these -- these is growing.
 2 That means not only infrastructure in our state, also
 3 economic infrastructure for the side of Mexico and also
 4 this side of the border in order to hold this increasing
 5 volume and to be more competitive in -- in cost and --
 6 and time, you know, as time is money so to cross to --
 7 to the other side.
 8 There's estimation around that 50 percent
 9 of the nearshoring investment of those related with
 10 nearshoring investment in the last year choose Nuevo
 11 Leon. This estimation is that 13 states of Mexico hold
 12 all the nearshoring investment last year, but Nuevo
 13 Leon, 50 percent, that gives us the idea of the impact
 14 of nearshoring in our state.
 15 Why they choose Nuevo Leon is Mexico
 16 largest recipient for foreign direct investment, most
 17 productive human capita in Mexico, highest GDP per
 18 capita in Mexico, highly skilled workforce, competitive
 19 supply chains and we have more than 140 industrial
 20 parks. Also we have great connect -- connectivity with
 21 direct, domestic -- direct and domestic and
 22 international flights. We have connections with ports,
 23 highways, roads, international border. Also is --
 24 Monterrey is home of the top-ranking university and
 25 business school Latin America, which provides most

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1 productive and qualified talent in the country. It is a
 2 state where more engineers and technicians graduate per
 3 year in Mexico.
 4 As I mentioned we have more than 140
 5 industrial parks, it's the region with the most
 6 industrial parks in Mexico. Monterrey is known as the
 7 largest industrial city in Mexico. Also we have a part
 8 of research and technology innovation with our
 9 world-class infrastructure exclusive for R&D.
 10 And this is a sample of some foreign
 11 companies located in Monterrey, mostly in the automobile
 12 industry, home appliance and IT and software. So you
 13 can see some brands. Also we have in the sector of
 14 aerospace, food, beverage and others. Also we have 13
 15 clusters with the opportunity of promoting growth in
 16 strategic sector, and we have pro- -- a promotion agency
 17 who is in charge of supporting of strategic sector
 18 investment who coordinates with the private sector.
 19 For all of this we think that we are going
 20 to continue growing this -- this next year, not only for
 21 nearshoring also by new business that we bring to Nuevo
 22 Leon. Right now we are in the spotlight after
 23 announcement of Tesla's new investment. This will give
 24 us a great opportunity to bring much more new investment
 25 not only in the automobile industry sector or electric

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1 vehicles, but also other sectors.
 2 And to close this introduction I would
 3 like to -- to show a -- show a video of Nuevo Leon.
 4 Oops.
 5 Can I put the -- the last one -- does the
 6 last one, the slide on play the video? This will be the
 7 last one. The black one. This. If they can help me
 8 to. It's in the PowerPoint, the last slide, the black
 9 one, just play it. Okay. Play.
 10 (WHEREUPON, video was played.)
 11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bravo.
 12 (Applause.)
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: Well done.
 14 MR. LAVCEVIC: Thank you. I will give the
 15 floor to Gregorio Canales.
 16 MR. CANALES: Good morning to all of you.
 17 Good morning, Honorable Jane Nelson. Nice to meet you.
 18 My name is Greg Canales. I hope you don't
 19 have any problems pronouncing. My ancestors arrived
 20 first here to Texas many, many years ago to a little
 21 town south of San Antonio called Devine, and at that
 22 moment it was called Devino, Texas, and then they move
 23 all of south Texas and Mexico.
 24 My history with these two Laredos go back
 25 to 1976 when I was hired by a maquiladora in Mexico came

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1 to these two towns to check on the border crossing
 2 problems. That was my first assignment. I had to
 3 check, go in the trucks, do the crossing myself with the
 4 cargo, back and forth, 21 times in one week, make my
 5 report and go back to Monterrey to report this. I would
 6 say that many things have changed since then. Many
 7 things. Some of them for the good, but some others
 8 remain the same. The line in time of crossing is still
 9 an issue and -- and the issue will come out right now as
 10 an important element to address.
 11 I've been blessed with good business in my
 12 consulting firm to help foreign countries establish
 13 operations in Mexico. Last year we received between
 14 Monterrey and Saltillo 46 new Chinese companies starting
 15 operations in that area. We expect for this year the
 16 number to be close to 100 and, probably, for next year
 17 another 100. For 2025 I don't know, I cannot see that
 18 far, but, at least, this year and the next it will be
 19 very, very good. But that's also -- will place an issue
 20 on the border crossing. So what I'm saying, the rope is
 21 tight but it's going to get tighter in the months to
 22 come. So whatever you do, do it fast, because it is
 23 going to be very fast -- the moving.
 24 Just last Sunday in the afternoon -- by
 25 the way, my weeks since 2016, when I started working

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1 with Chinese companies, start Sundays in the afternoon
 2 with conferences with China. And I have a conference
 3 with a Chinese company from a new town that I didn't
 4 talk to well before. Qingdao is the name of the town.
 5 Probably you will remember, a little bit, some of you
 6 maybe, a beer -- Chinese beer called Tsingtao, well,
 7 that's the town where the beer is made because some
 8 Germans arrived to that town.
 9 And he told me, I am a plastic bottle
 10 manufacturer, the ones you can buy in Wal-Mart, Costco,
 11 and why you can put water to take to your gym and drink
 12 water. It looks very simple, but it's a high technology
 13 device in which whenever you pour it into your mouth,
 14 allows the water to come out, but if you make it like
 15 that, it won't.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: What?
 17 MR. CANALES: It's not an electric device.
 18 It's just mechanical, materials, engineering that is
 19 divide -- is being innovated by them. They want to come
 20 here, and he told me -- he doesn't know anything about
 21 nearshoring, re-shoring, friendly shoring or whatever
 22 shoring it might be, they don't even know what is
 23 that -- but he told me one thing, he said, I understand
 24 one element and it's called decoupling. I am a
 25 businessman and I want to be in China, but I also want

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1 to be in North America. So I need to make a footprint
 2 in North America and Mexico could be the place. But
 3 also I've been president of the Chamber of Commerce in
 4 this city several times and many of the business
 5 community is asking me -- because I am the first one to
 6 address the issue of Mexico to help them to re-shore in
 7 Mexico --

8 SECRETARY NELSON: Uh-huh.

9 MR. CANALES: -- at least 40 companies and
 10 we're talking a guy who is a modest businessman, just a
 11 newly billionaire which is regular stuff in China, and
 12 there are more billionaires willing to come.

13 So, once again, I would like to stress the
 14 rope is tight, but it's going to get tighter. We need
 15 to address the issue of the border crossing and not -- I
 16 don't have cameras, sensors, or whatever modern device,
 17 but I can see. And what I see is a long line, two and
 18 three miles on the Mexican side, and I don't see lines
 19 on the U.S. side. What's that tell you? Something is
 20 happening here.

21 We -- as consultants in Mexico, we always
 22 address and put to the table the newcomers the issue of
 23 the city PAC (phonetic) in order to -- to speed up the
 24 process. But it won't help if something, like the
 25 gentleman here mentioned it, if they have time to get to

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1 that FAST line that won't help. We need to do something
 2 in order to get the trucks to that FAST line as soon as
 3 possible in order to cross. Time is money, yes. Time
 4 is of an essence, too, yes. And we need to help those
 5 companies to do it as fast as possible.

6 They are real investors. Most of the
 7 Chinese are buying land in Mexico, they are not leasing,
 8 they're buying land for one reason only, they -- I
 9 normally take the photo of the title with them because
 10 they want to say to their families, I own a piece of
 11 land somewhere, in this case Mexico. In China you
 12 cannot do that. So they have that story and they have
 13 that willing to do it. We need to help them. We're
 14 doing our part in Mexico, how to work within the legal
 15 framework and the business environment in Mexico, but
 16 they need also the -- the help to make and cross the --
 17 the two countries the merchandise.

18 There's also one other thing I learned in
 19 those -- these years. So you can guess right now that
 20 I'm almost 40 -- I mean, 70, but -- but the -- between
 21 the two area of those there are many participants. One
 22 is the federal government that you need to align for
 23 things to happen; two, you have the state governments
 24 that also you need to align for things to happen; and
 25 then you have the city governments that you need to

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1 align for things to happen. If those three orders of
 2 government are not aligned in the same page and with the
 3 same objectives and goals it won't happen. I've seen
 4 already it won't happen. And I'm talking about the two
 5 sides of the coun- -- in the two countries not only one.

6 So in this meeting should be people on --
 7 on the Mexican side that can decide of that. I seen
 8 some airports being done by some Mexican states like
 9 Nuevo Leon with the border crossing in Colombia, yes, in
 10 Tamaulipas also, yes, in Coahuila, yes, in Chihuahua,
 11 yes, but it's not enough apparently. So we need to
 12 speed up that process.

13 There is one more thing. Most of the
 14 trade that is going to happen it will happen with
 15 increments on trade from China. We help the companies
 16 to fulfill the rule of origins on the USMCA, but we need
 17 a better understanding from the Mex- -- the U.S.
 18 authorities on how to apply for that. We need the
 19 federal government to be sitting in this table in order
 20 to make a part of the deal.

21 Whenever I ask CBP or USTR for
 22 confirmation of a rule of origin I need a quick answer
 23 and certain answer not a vague answer as we have. That
 24 won't help because it doesn't give certainty to the
 25 investor.

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1 So sorry I bring to the table a lot of
 2 complaints, but I've been asked to present the real
 3 situation. Last year I signed out a -- a good
 4 investment. Naturally I signed 18 deals, last year was
 5 my best year. One of them is a sofa, reclining sofa
 6 manufacturer, that is going to hire 8,000 people in
 7 Monterrey and they're going to cross around 1,000 to
 8 1,500 trucks per month, just one company. So those
 9 companies are going to come and there are more online.

10 So on the private sector that I belong to
 11 if we can collaborate with authorities on how to deal
 12 with this issue, please call me. I will put all my
 13 effort and knowledge and experience to the -- to the
 14 table in order to come out with good solutions. Thank
 15 you very much for your time.

16 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Wow. Thank
 17 you.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. LOZANO: I'm Hector Lozano. Good
 20 morning to all Madam Secretary, so nice to be here.

21 So as Gregorio showed we -- we help
 22 companies to establish their operation in Mexico. We
 23 have been receiving lot -- a lot of investment from
 24 Chinese companies, and the thing is that these companies
 25 manage huge -- volumes of operation is huge. So we are



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1 going to see an increase in operation on the border very
 2 fast, very soon. These companies they're almost
 3 finished with their factories right now. They're in the
 4 process of importing their fixed assets. They're --
 5 they're going to -- they're going to start operation
 6 in -- in the next few months and, maybe, they're going
 7 to ship 300-400 containers per month, each of these
 8 companies, and there's another one of this kind.
 9 So I don't -- I don't believe that we have
 10 that -- the infrastructure to -- to handle this all,
 11 this high volume of new operation because right now
 12 the -- the volume of operation is very tight. And you
 13 can see you have holiday in the U.S. and -- and -- and
 14 then you're going to have a house in Mexico because we
 15 don't have enough trucks to manage the -- the balance
 16 that we need.
 17 So when you have -- we need to be prepared
 18 to have enough suppliers. We need -- we -- we were --
 19 we were told to talk about the -- the benefits of the
 20 nearshoring -- nearshoring. We -- I believe that if we
 21 work together we can -- it's going to strengthen the
 22 region, you know. Many companies right now, they're --
 23 they're -- they're seeing Mexicans as a good option
 24 to -- to -- to put or invest, and we know that we have
 25 the opportunity to work in some issues that we're

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1 working right now, and we know that we have to have
 2 qualified labor to provide the -- the -- the service to
 3 those companies, and also we know -- we know that we
 4 have to have security in the roads so -- so they can --
 5 and they have to meet -- they need to have legal
 6 certainty in the operation and for the investment in
 7 Mexico.
 8 So those are some more issues that -- that
 9 we're working, but it -- it is good to know that if we,
 10 as parties, work together we can tell our clients
 11 that -- that things are going to be expedited.
 12 Right now, as was mentioned, time is
 13 money, things are going really fast, and they want to
 14 know the certainty and the -- they need to know that
 15 their goods are going to be in place on time where they
 16 need it. So I believe if -- if we could expedite the
 17 custom clearing process, because right now for a company
 18 it's -- it's taking a very, very long time, I believe we
 19 can try -- if we can collaborate and have better
 20 information we -- within U.S. Customs and Mexican
 21 Customs that will be really great to have.
 22 Also I -- to have the same kind of
 23 treatments of how we are going to deliver the -- the
 24 goods, right? We have different process. Basically,
 25 the U.S. is more a trust, you know, and Mexico as what

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1 they say it's a red line, a green line, it's not that --
 2 it's -- it's a smart system and there is risk, but
 3 it's -- it -- it's not as -- as -- as in the U.S. So
 4 we -- we think that we need to establish better
 5 communication with the two parties and I think then it
 6 will be great in order for -- for -- to achieve the
 7 goals that we have. Thank you all.
 8 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Thank you.
 9 Are there any questions or comments?
 10 Excellent presentation from all three of
 11 you. Very informative. Any --
 12 MR. SCHWEBEL: I have a question -- a
 13 question if I can.
 14 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes. Sorry. I did not
 15 see you.
 16 MR. SCHWEBEL: Madam Secretary, Gerry
 17 Schwebel again.
 18 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 19 MR. SCHWEBEL: Mostly in regards to the
 20 foreign direct investment that Roy had mentioned and
 21 Gregorio mentioned that you have Chinese companies. Do
 22 you all -- is the state measuring the foreign direct
 23 investment by -- by number of companies or by
 24 commodities of products that are -- that are being
 25 manufactured, that are being -- coming to your state?

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1 And the reason I ask that question because
 2 of the dial- -- the -- you know, some of it is within
 3 the purview of the state, but some of it is -- is of
 4 national concern, too, as to the foreign direct
 5 investment of Chinese investment in Mexico.
 6 So how are you-all tracking that? And if
 7 you are tracking that, how are you-all doing it so that
 8 in turn it doesn't become -- you mentioned rules of
 9 origin, you know, that commodity does -- doesn't become
 10 a problem in regards to what's coming in into the United
 11 States, because we are the largest market in the world?
 12 MR. CANALES: Yeah. Yeah. The -- the
 13 measurement of the foreign direct investment is -- is --
 14 is -- actually it's an international standard set forth
 15 by the -- by the International Monetary Fund and the
 16 world bank, it's called Balance of Payment manual. I
 17 think we are right now in the No. 6 version of that, and
 18 that sets exactly the rules in order to account for what
 19 is foreign direct invest -- investure -- investment or
 20 not.
 21 Now, having said that, basically, if you
 22 see a balance sheet, you have assets, you have the X,
 23 and then you have capital, whatever is in the capital
 24 that's the foreign direct investment not -- not the part
 25 of the debt. There is one part of the debt that my

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1 account indicates in Mexico which is intracompany debt.
 2 So if the foreign entity gives money as
 3 part of a loan to the Mexican entity and then for more
 4 than three years that is account as foreign direct
 5 investment. Okay? And that is the way we account it.
 6 Companies -- foreign direct investment corporations, I
 7 mean, companies with foreign direct investment have to
 8 report to the National Foreign Direct Investment
 9 Registry in Mexico such amount of money. Okay?
 10 But you are right. It's not the whole
 11 story. Actually I've been criticizing myself and the --
 12 the International Monetary Fund that that is an old way
 13 to -- to account. That's about a hundred years old.
 14 It's doesn't -- it doesn't work anymore. Why?
 15 Because if I see a Wal-Mart in Mexico,
 16 probably the only thing belonging to the Wal-Mart as an
 17 asset is the building. Whatever is inside, which is the
 18 most viable thing, is not owned by Wal-Mart it's owned
 19 by the suppliers and they are not going to be counted in
 20 until they check out in the ratio. So what is all of
 21 that. It's part of the accounting, yes, but it's not
 22 counted. So what I mean, the effect of the foreign
 23 direct investment is a lot more. You can expect at
 24 least 60-70 percent more on whatever is raised. That's
 25 one thing.

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1 The other thing is -- and that -- that
 2 registry is national, it's a national federal level. If
 3 the company is incorporated and has a domicile in
 4 Monterrey and then the investment is addressed or is
 5 counted as Nuevo Leon. But if the company is set forth
 6 and has a public domicile in Mexico City and then is
 7 accounted as Mexico City foreign direct investment.
 8 That is why when you see the breakdown of the foreign
 9 direct investment into the different states of Mexico,
 10 Mexico City happens to be numbering No. 1, No. 2, No. 3,
 11 and you said where is here in Mexico City the foreign
 12 direct investment? There is nothing. Because of the
 13 physical address or the incorporation of the company is
 14 based in Mexico City, that's the only reason. That's
 15 another complaint I have. I have complained to the
 16 Mexican government that it is not producing good
 17 statistics about that, but that's another story. That
 18 is the issue, okay?
 19 The third part: We have under the USMCA a
 20 good set of rules to account or declare what we should
 21 be considering Mexican or U.S. or Canada made products,
 22 okay? There is a bunch of rules, more than 800
 23 different rules. The basic one is if I import one raw
 24 material under chapter 39 and I export the final product
 25 on the chapter 47, and then that is enough to call it

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1 (inaudible) and to be eligible for free trade coming
 2 into the United States. There are more restrictive
 3 rules by the one of the auto industry, by the one of the
 4 textile industry, and by the one of the some of the
 5 products and -- food especially. Yes, there are. But
 6 that's the way we -- we -- we -- we count it.
 7 And we need the -- the --
 8 MR. SCHWEBEL: Thank you.
 9 MR. CANALES: Just we need the guidance
 10 because sometimes there is a -- even -- even we as an
 11 expert, sometimes we don't know how to consider one
 12 thing or the other. So instead of embarking the company
 13 in -- in some -- something that is not correct, we
 14 normally ask the federal government (CBP or USTR) can
 15 you confirm my understanding of the rule of origin which
 16 are set forth this way and sometimes they do not answer
 17 back in the way we want. That's it.
 18 MR. LAVCEVIC: Just I want to add to that
 19 about China and the companies that arrive to Nuevo Leon.
 20 Maybe six or five years ago doesn't figure
 21 it China and -- and the other companies. Right now,
 22 Secretary, for all of the companies that we are
 23 attending in the last year the second place is China
 24 after USA. Around 25 percent. So that gives the idea
 25 how the increase the -- the arrival of China companies.

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1 MR. LOZANO: Because of the epidemic, I
 2 believe, and because of the -- the duties that where
 3 imposed to China's goods, many Chinese companies see the
 4 opportunity to go to other countries and start
 5 manufacturing just to -- to expand. So we don't have --
 6 we as a respect -- as a consultant we do not have track
 7 as the government, but what we have seen is that they
 8 have -- well, three years ago there was a lot -- a lot
 9 of Korean investment. Because we have Kia now and so
 10 many suppliers of Kia started establishing their plants
 11 because of the near sourcing and because they wanted to
 12 do some transit to be goods that qualify, you know.
 13 Just to -- to say enable to make product doesn't mean
 14 that they have to be -- they need to have crossings,
 15 right?
 16 Right now in the last years we have seen
 17 the -- that the Chinese are very interested in investing
 18 in -- in putting plants in Mexico and they are big --
 19 big firms and big products and very -- very big plants.
 20 So it's -- it's not common to see that -- that -- that
 21 the -- the -- well, the -- the principal market for us
 22 is the U.S. as always. We -- we -- one days we -- we
 23 work -- we have U.S. companies that want to establish
 24 their operation in Mexico, but it is starting to see --
 25 we are starting to see Asian companies come to Mexico.



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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Any other
 2 comments or questions?
 3 MR. CALVO: I do, ma'am.
 4 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes, sir. Go ahead.
 5 And -- and, please, identify yourself again.
 6 MR. CALVO: Yeah. This is Eduardo Calvo
 7 with the El Paso MPO. Question for you all. I know
 8 that here we're talking transportation, but I'm
 9 interested in -- in -- in what you see in Monterrey and
 10 Nuevo Leon in general as far as other types of
 11 infrastructure.
 12 One of the things that -- that I hear
 13 the -- the maquila folks in -- in Ciudad Juarez is that
 14 right now you cannot -- there are no warehouses. Now,
 15 it's easy to put a warehouse up in -- or operation, but
 16 the -- the real issue is, power, water, natural gas and
 17 all of the other services, right?
 18 So I know that in Juarez -- south of
 19 Juarez in Samalayuca there's a new plant that -- so --
 20 so the generation of power is not -- not the issue. The
 21 problem is distribution -- transmission and
 22 distribution, right; getting it to the industrial parks.
 23 So can you talk about if you're having the same issues
 24 out there in Nuevo Leon.
 25 MR. LAVCEVIC: The main issue in -- in --

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1 right now in is -- in Monterrey and the metropolitan are
 2 is the -- the transmission line. That's the problem.
 3 We have power, but we don't have transmission line.
 4 That's the main --
 5 MR. CANALES: The -- the issue -- you --
 6 you are correct. Not to too much -- well, depending on
 7 the city you have issues with water or natural gas. But
 8 all through the northeastern part of Mexico -- actually
 9 I would say all the whole country is electricity, yes,
 10 and it is mainly on the last mile -- Toluca -- that the
 11 plants need. There is enough power generation, actually
 12 Monterrey is a net exporter of energy to our neighboring
 13 states, and that's -- that's normally done at
 14 400,000-volts, that's high tension, that -- the -- that
 15 lines is called transmission lines. And then you have
 16 to lower the voltage to 115,000, that is called also
 17 high tension but for distribution. That is the one that
 18 get to the park or to the company in which the park puts
 19 another substation in which they lower even the -- the
 20 voltage to 13,500 or 34,800 depending on the needs and
 21 finally get to the company. That is the last mile we
 22 don't have.
 23 And the reason being is very simple,
 24 the -- the monopoly of that transmission and
 25 distribution of energy in Mexico belongs to CFE, the --

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1 our Federal Electricity Commission, and they have done
 2 it -- they haven't done it in the past seven years.
 3 Monterrey was considered the yule of the
 4 electric -- electric -- electric grid in the country
 5 because we have three concentric grids all connected.
 6 So if something happened in one point, immediately they
 7 shut off that part and they can provide the energy from
 8 the other point. But even that is suffering what we are
 9 suffering right now. Juarez is a good example. It used
 10 to be in a good shape, now it's in a lot of problems
 11 because of that. In the case of Juarez also generation
 12 is an issue.
 13 They're normally trying to hook up a
 14 little bit with the Texas grid which is, although,
 15 independent from the rest of the grid in the United
 16 States. That's also an issue there. They need also
 17 normally distribution, but they also need to secure
 18 generation, which is, to me, kind of weird, because you
 19 know El Paso and you know Juarez and what is always
 20 there is the sun. So you can use the sun to generate
 21 energy, but there are not enough solar panel generation
 22 sites there.
 23 In the case of Monterrey, we are working
 24 right now with the CFE in order to say, okay, we
 25 understand that you don't have money, because to make

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1 a -- a -- a sub- -- a reduction area substation you need
 2 around \$25-, \$30 million. Okay. You don't have it, but
 3 we have it. What about if we put it, that you grant us
 4 the rights of those KBAs to us, and CFE doesn't like it
 5 very much so we are negotiating with them in order to
 6 get approved for that.
 7 We can set up, at least, three reduction
 8 substations to do that in Monterrey that will solve the
 9 problem. And we are ready to invest \$100 million in
 10 that, but they just don't accept for us to maintain
 11 rights of those KBAs for X amount of time. Because if
 12 I'm going to invest that amount of money, at least, I
 13 need six, seven, eight years to develop of my part and
 14 hook up all of the different new companies that will
 15 arrive. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense. We are
 16 negotiating that part. It's not easy, but we are
 17 negotiating that part.
 18 MR. CALVO: Do you see that -- do you see
 19 that as a -- as a bigger challenge than the
 20 transportation side? Or what is -- what is the biggest
 21 challenge that -- that we're facing in -- on the Mexican
 22 side?
 23 MR. CANALES: Oh, well, there are several.
 24 It's not one factor. I think it's a multifactor
 25 situation that we need to address.

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1 The infrastructure is one. The -- the
 2 people are the other.
 3 MR. CALVO: Labor.
 4 MR. CANALES: Labor.
 5 MR. CALVO: Qualified workforce.
 6 MR. CANALES: And qualified -- well, I
 7 wouldn't say qualified. Qualified is, Do you see my two
 8 fingers? Yeah. You're qualified. You're hired.
 9 The -- the issue is labor. We're going to
 10 have some labor issue very soon. Then is the border
 11 crossing. Yes. Water. It is an issue for the people
 12 living in the city, yes, it is an issue. We had that
 13 issue last summer. But for companies using water is not
 14 really an issue, because most of the -- the water usage
 15 for processes are -- are recycled water, and I -- and
 16 it's a very economic simple answer. If I buy a cubic
 17 meter of recycled water it costs me like \$.40, but if I
 18 buy a potable water cubic meter and then it costs me \$3.
 19 So if I -- and -- and that potable water,
 20 which is good for all of us, because it has some
 21 minerals and -- and then it is good for our stomach, for
 22 the machines they're not good. They need to clean it.
 23 Even the potable water they need to clean it, they need
 24 to get to the point that it's called ultra pure water to
 25 put it in the processes. And then that -- that for

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1 doing that they need to put some money to clean it,
 2 around \$1 per cubic meter.
 3 So if I'm going to put \$1 extra over the
 4 \$3 I spend in potable water versus \$1 into the \$.40 I
 5 spend in the recycled water, well, make the numbers.
 6 Which one is better? That is what is going -- Tesla is
 7 going to use in Monterrey, recycled water, because it's
 8 cheaper. I hope I answered your question.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Any other
 10 questions?
 11 Here is the situation. We are right on
 12 time. This is a time at which we could pause to take a
 13 break or we can power right through and everybody can go
 14 get your coffee as you'd like. I'm -- I've got a
 15 teacher's bladder; I can go all morning long if I need
 16 to. So is everybody okay with powering through?
 17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.
 18 SECRETARY NELSON: I am with the group.
 19 So just go get the coffee as need. If you need to
 20 powder your nose go powder your nose.
 21 So we are going to now hear a presentation
 22 about regional infrastructure projects from each of our
 23 border cities along Laredo District. We -- our mayor's
 24 here of our host city. We are so delighted. We have --
 25 (Applause.)

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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes. So we're going
 2 to -- and the -- the mayor protem has done a wonderful
 3 job representing you. The Mayor Protem Vanessa Perez
 4 has been here and has done a wonderful job representing
 5 you, and I hope that she will add -- because she was
 6 here this morning listening to presentations, and I know
 7 she will add to fill in based on what she heard earlier,
 8 but and I would like to recognize you, Mr. Mayor. Thank
 9 you so much for hosting. I said earlier before you got
 10 here, I was in Laredo about 15, maybe 18 years ago.
 11 Yesterday I drove in, I couldn't believe it. I -- I
 12 didn't even recognize the city. Your growth has been
 13 phenomenal.
 14 MAYOR TREVINO: Thank you.
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: I would like to
 16 recognize you to make marks and -- and certainly
 17 comment, anything you -- anything you -- it's yours.
 18 Here. Here you go.
 19 MAYOR TREVINO: Thank you very much and
 20 good morning. Buenos dias.
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: Buenos dias.
 22 MAYOR TREVINO: Dr. Victor Trevino, Mayor
 23 for City of Laredo. I do want to welcome all of our
 24 distinguished guests, Madam Secretary, thank you, to the
 25 City of Laredo.

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1 It is my sincere pleasure to discuss some
 2 of the planning and projects that are occurring that
 3 will ensure Laredo continues as the No. 1 port of entry
 4 in the United States. And, for example, we currently
 5 have 8,000 plus trucks per day per direction cross the
 6 border at the World Trade Bridge and our Laredo Colombia
 7 Bridge, which is the No. 2 commercial port of entry in
 8 U.S. and Mexico border where we expect incredible
 9 growth.
 10 (Spanish spoken.)
 11 But this distinction is not achieved
 12 solely through our ownership of the international
 13 bridges. It is also achieved because of our incredible
 14 bridge staff and our strong local and cross border
 15 relationships. I also want to reiterate the importance
 16 of our relationship with Customs and Border Patrol and
 17 the Mexican Aduanas and our collaboration and ties to
 18 our sister City of Nuevo Laredo and the mayor Carmen
 19 Lilia Canturosas, Laredo, and the state of Tamaulipas
 20 and Nuevo Leon.
 21 As I see Secretary Ninfa Cantu and
 22 Secretary Marco Gonzalez are here today (Spanish
 23 spoken), when it comes to domestic infrastructure it is
 24 also very important to have the necessary infrastructure
 25 in place as Laredo continues to carry significant



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1 commercial burden for the entire country. So it is of
 2 vital importance and benefits to the state of Texas and
 3 to the U.S. to prioritize some of these infrastructure
 4 projects with the growth that is already here and about
 5 to come.

6 Some of the ongoing projects include the
 7 following -- and not to detail every -- I'm just going
 8 to touch -- touch on the topics. In early February
 9 2023, the City of Laredo CBP GSA organized and opened
 10 the new WTB FAST lanes which as created for new FAST
 11 lanes between the international bridge and IA-69 West.
 12 We are currently progressing and have advanced
 13 significantly with our expansion of the World Trade
 14 Bridge. The City of Laredo began permitting efforts for
 15 the expansion in early 2022 with the environmental
 16 clearance studies started in March 2023, and I do want
 17 to thank again the governor of Tamaulipas Dr. Americo
 18 Villareal Anaya, and Secretary Cantu for our partnership
 19 in this great venture.

20 The WTB expansion project will construct a
 21 new eight-lane bridge dedicated to northbound commercial
 22 traffic only. The World Trade Bridge expansion project
 23 will construct two new southbound lanes on the upstream
 24 side of the existing bridge, two lanes northbound on the
 25 existing bridge dedicated to FAST lane commercial

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1 vehicle only. And these are just topics -- everything
 2 will be delineated. Full expansion project open to
 3 traffic on December 2027.

4 So these are the updates on some of the
 5 projects that we have, and before I leave, I have
 6 another commitment, I would like to invite everyone on
 7 another note to -- to go and -- and participate and be
 8 present at the World -- at the Uni-Trade Stadium where
 9 The Tecalotes de los Dos Laredos will play, which is
 10 another reason why Laredo's unique, and we are proud to
 11 have the only team of the -- in the world that plays in
 12 two countries which calls it home.

13 And thank you again for your time today.
 14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 SECRETARY NELSON: And, Mr. Mayor, thank
 17 you again for hosting us. What a beautiful city and the
 18 growth is just phenomenal and handled so beautifully.

19 Now, the Chair would like to recognize
 20 County Judge Tano Tijerina. How did I do?

21 COUNTY JUDGE TIJERINA: Madam Secretary,
 22 it is truly an honor to have you in here, present with
 23 us in Webb County, City of Laredo. Thank you so much.
 24 It is a -- it is joy to walk in, in the morning and see
 25 somebody so bubbly. I think you do have a teacher's

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1 personality, so we thank you very much for that.
 2 With that said, Madam Secretary, there is
 3 a couple of -- actually I'm going to be speaking on
 4 four -- I'm going to be overviewing just four major
 5 projects that we're doing here in Webb County and the
 6 City of Laredo and as you know -- and I like to start
 7 with this and I'm going to end with this. Perfection is
 8 always under construction. All right.

9 So with that said, because of our growth
 10 and because of what's going on we're constantly going to
 11 be under construction just like the great state of Texas
 12 and we're doing a great job and we're going to need to
 13 continue moving. I'm very proud (Spanish spoken.) I
 14 just told them that I wanted to thank them for being
 15 here and --

16 SECRETARY NELSON: I understood every word
 17 you said.

18 MAYOR TREVINO: Very good. All right.
 19 All right. Madam Secretary, I won't take much more of
 20 your time. We're going to go ahead on the Hachar -- the
 21 Hachar project is a partnership between Webb County, the
 22 City of Laredo and TxDOT. This project will be sober
 23 ready in 2024 providing major congestion relief in the
 24 FM 1472, also known as Mines Road area, believe it or
 25 not. FM 1472 as you can see on the slide.

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1 Mines Road is currently in the top ten
 2 most congested roadways for traffic -- truck traffic in
 3 the entire state of Texas. If you're a billionaire and
 4 you want to cross some trucks and you want to come to
 5 Laredo that's the place to see it and you're going to
 6 get excited about it.

7 The project will content -- connect the
 8 FM 1472 Mines Road area to I-35 to the east providing a
 9 relief route to Loop 20. This will also provide
 10 economic opportunity to northern Webb County as well as
 11 provide much needed improved safety and mobility in the
 12 vicinity of the World Trade Bridge. One reason major
 13 accomplishment was a partnership between TxDOT, Webb
 14 County, the City of Laredo and the regional MPO to work
 15 with TxDOT Austin and to utilize MPO munching --
 16 matching funds to cover a nearly \$100,000,000
 17 construction gap caused by escalation.

18 If we could, go to the next slide, please.

19 Our outer loop, this is our No. 2 project.
 20 And they're not by order, the -- the priorities, but I
 21 just would like to name them. No. 2 outer loop -- the
 22 Laredo outer loop was a proposed roadway facility
 23 located in Webb County that extends east of Laredo from
 24 the I-35 SH-2550 interchange to the north and vicinity
 25 of the proposed fifth bridge crossing in the south near



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1 the City of New Laredo. The 45-mile project is an
 2 ultimate step in the growth of Webb County into the
 3 future connecting the future 12 -- I-12 -- I mean, I'm
 4 sorry, I-2, I-69 and I-35 interstates in the region, and
 5 also I-27 will be coming down from Ports-to-Plains is
 6 another one. TxDOT recently hired a consultant to start
 7 working on this project.
 8 No. 3, outer loop segments 1, 2 and 3: In
 9 2022 Webb County extended an opportunity to TxDOT to
 10 leverage \$10 million from local Webb County dollars to
 11 expedite these segments and to expedite connectivity in
 12 south Laredo and ultimately to our next topic. This
 13 commitment included Webb County providing local funds
 14 for surveys, schematics, environmental document, our --
 15 our right-of-way acquisition map, acquisition services
 16 and land costs.
 17 And then last, but not least, I'm going to
 18 finish off with, I think, what I would consider one of
 19 the most important subjects in our region, because -- I
 20 say "region" but it's also for the state of Texas and
 21 for the nation, not only Mexico being the bloodline for
 22 this 4/5 bridge, but also for the port of entry being
 23 our here No. 1 land port and for the state of Texas.
 24 As you well know, Madam Secretary, not too
 25 long ago Governor Abbott had done some -- another stop,

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1 I guess, if you want to do -- another -- another
 2 checkpoint, and it was amazing to see it caused a lot of
 3 problems, regardless why he did it, but I thought it was
 4 an important reason, after the fact that he did it,
 5 because we got -- ultimately we got to see what happens
 6 when you shut down little old Webb County, Laredo,
 7 Texas. People in one week I think lost like \$4 billion,
 8 and so it is amazing to see what happens -- and forgive
 9 me for when I say my colleagues in El -- in El Paso,
 10 and I -- and I bring them up quite regularly, and please
 11 forgive me this is not a slap in the face to anyone, but
 12 this just a reflection of. You know, El Paso is
 13 ranked 16th in inland ports with seven bridges, four of
 14 them being international, and I think it's time that
 15 Webb County is -- also keeps moving forward, because we
 16 do carry about 63 percent of the trade that passes
 17 through to the United States on a yearly basis. So with
 18 that said, with Laredo as the No. 1 inland port in the
 19 nation and our roadway networking near nearing capacity
 20 the -- the logical next step is to create a second port
 21 of entry in the region. Webb County is currently
 22 partnering with TxDOT, federal highways SouthWood Bridge
 23 Company to work on permitting, engineering and
 24 environmental need to -- to develop and to deliver the
 25 crucial project quickly, and also the City of Laredo is

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1 going to be a vital part, an integral part. It's going
 2 to be a commu- -- it's going to be a huge synergy
 3 that's going to put this together.
 4 We are -- the only thing that we're
 5 lacking right now, Madam Secretary, basically, is an
 6 environmental study (the NEPA) for -- for the federal
 7 government. Basically, our -- our familia, our
 8 counterparts in Mexico, everything has already been
 9 worked on as far as infrastructure, as far as
 10 permission, as far as permisos, as far as all of that is
 11 concerned that they are ready and so are we.
 12 So with that said, if there's anything
 13 that we can do or you can do to continue pushing this
 14 forward, this vital project forward. And I know I've
 15 said it a million times, but I'd like to say it to you,
 16 if you consider -- and I'll end with this.
 17 If you consider the state of Texas as a
 18 heart and Webb County as the aorta and the United States
 19 as a body, well, you can only imagine what happens when
 20 you get plugged or you can only imagine when you get
 21 ballooned, you're only going to prosper and you're going
 22 to stay alive, and, more importantly, Mexico is truly
 23 the bloodline for us and so we're very grateful. And
 24 Canada -- you have a three-link chain, it's very
 25 important, because if you look at our maps how it grows

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1 and grows out, you will be astonished and amazed on how,
 2 where everything comes from and where it goes to in one
 3 week's time.
 4 With that said, thank you, Madam
 5 Secretary, for your time and thank you for your
 6 presence. Appreciate you very much.
 7 (Applause.)
 8 SECRETARY NELSON: I will say, somebody
 9 last night talked about bedazzling t-shirts that said,
 10 Laredo, We are No. 1. I don't know who that was, but I
 11 thought it was a good idea.
 12 Do you know what bedazzling is? It's
 13 sparkles.
 14 COUNTY JUDGE TIJERINA: It's a
 15 sparkling --
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes. I thought
 17 bedazzling t-shirts was a great idea.
 18 COUNTY JUDGE TIJERINA: Okay.
 19 SECRETARY NELSON: So next we're going to
 20 recognize Mayor Rolando Salinas on behalf of the City of
 21 Eagle Pass.
 22 MAYOR SALINAS: Thank you.
 23 SECRETARY NELSON: There you are.
 24 MAYOR SALINAS: Thank you.
 25 Madam Secretary --



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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 2 MAYOR SALINAS: Madam Secretary, Mayor,
 3 Judge, thank you so much for hosting us. I love Laredo.
 4 What can I say? I'm --
 5 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 6 MAYOR SALINAS: -- from Eagle Pass, but
 7 my -- my private profession is, I'm an attorney and we
 8 actually have an office here in Laredo, so I travel once
 9 a week from Eagle Pass to Laredo.
 10 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 11 MAYOR SALINAS: But it's an honor to be
 12 here today. I'm Rolando Salinas, Mayor of, like I said,
 13 the City Eagle Pass, and right now, like Mr. Gibson
 14 said, Eagle Pass, Maverick County, we have our -- our
 15 County Judge, it's a very exciting time right now for
 16 our city. There is a lot of interest in -- in
 17 industrial, in commercial development, we see it not
 18 just in our side but in also Piedras Negras on the
 19 Mexican side. So as leaders of our community we have to
 20 get ready for -- for this growth that's actually going
 21 on right now. And we know more of it is coming.
 22 We've seen increase in commercial vehicles
 23 crossing our port of entries. Our port of entry is one
 24 of the safest in the whole border, we're very proud of
 25 that. Around \$30 billion in trade goes through Eagle

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1 Pass/Piedras Negras. Not like Laredo that's No. 1, but
 2 we'll gladly take a little bit of that off your hands if
 3 you want. As a city we actually -- part of our budget,
 4 a big chunk, depends on those border crossings, so we
 5 always want to make sure that we invest in our bridges
 6 and we keep our commercial companies happy whenever
 7 they -- they cross in from Mexico into the United
 8 States.
 9 So with that said, I -- I'd like to share
 10 some current initiatives. The first one is, we recently
 11 approved an upgrade of -- a \$5 million toll system
 12 upgrade to our Bridge No. 2 system. This will allow the
 13 free flow of a toll tag, and it will just make us more
 14 efficient. As you know, time is money -- I know -- I
 15 think they -- they've said that before today, and
 16 whenever you have commercial vehicles crossing we want
 17 to make sure that we make it efficient for them that
 18 they want to cross through Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras
 19 because it's so fast. This will also provide different
 20 payment options, like credit cards, Tap-to-Pay, Apple
 21 Pay, all this new and -- and modern stuff, right? As
 22 they say, oh, welcome to the 21st century.
 23 One of our -- our big, huge projects is a
 24 roadway reconfiguration and improvement on Bridge No. 2.
 25 In -- in Eagle Pass we have two -- two bridges --

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1 international bridges, and one rail bridge, so these
 2 bridges are very important. And with the increase in
 3 commercial vehicle traffic we've approved a
 4 redesign/reconfiguration of bridge No. 2. Right now as
 5 it stands it's kind of confusing and the design already
 6 out -- outgrew itself. So back in the day, it was good,
 7 but we see that we need to get prepared for the increase
 8 in commercial vehicles, so we've approved a -- a
 9 reconfiguration that thankfully we already have the
 10 funding for.
 11 We've been working with GSA, CBP, DPS to
 12 find the best solution in this reconfiguration. We
 13 recently had meetings where we finally approved this
 14 design that you see right here which will be helpful
 15 to -- to POVs and commercial traffic where we don't --
 16 we don't collide with each other. Right now there is a
 17 lot of -- there is a lot of points that are very
 18 confusing and this will allow private vehicles and
 19 commercial vehicles to freely flow through our City of
 20 Eagle Pass.
 21 So the -- the solutions that we found out
 22 about were that we're going to separate inbound and
 23 outbound traffic. We also have the dedicated truck
 24 lanes which will improve the traffic flow, improve the
 25 travel times, safety, and also en- -- encourage growth.

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1 We're -- we're doing this not just for now, but also
 2 getting prepared for 30, 40 years in advance.
 3 Now, our future initiatives. Okay. Oh,
 4 let me go back. We're -- we've been working with the
 5 City of Piedras Negras with the Claudio Bres and -- and
 6 also the Mayor Norma Trevino on our bridge No. 2, and
 7 what we want to do is we've initiated -- initiated the
 8 discussion to add lanes to the existing bridge. As you
 9 all know to get a new bridge that takes many, many
 10 years, but what we're trying to do is to add more lanes
 11 to -- to our bridge No. 2, which, of course, will take a
 12 presidential permit so we've hired a company to assist
 13 us in that process. I know that, I believe, Brownsville
 14 did that not too long ago, if I'm not mistaken, where
 15 they added some lanes to their bridge. So we plan on
 16 visiting with them and -- to see how they -- they got it
 17 done so quick. So the first step would be to conduct a
 18 feasibility study with traffic and readiness studies
 19 and -- and also we're working on the presidential
 20 permits.
 21 Okay. This is just a little brief on
 22 what's going on in -- in Eagle Pass. We're very excited
 23 to be here, we look forward to working with everyone
 24 here. Border trade is very important to -- to us like
 25 it is to every city and every county that's represented



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1 here today. So thank you very much for having me.
 2 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 3 (Applause.)
 4 SECRETARY NELSON: Now, the Chair would
 5 like to recognize County Judge Ramsey Cantu on behalf of
 6 Maverick County.
 7 COUNTY JUDGE CANTU: Thank you, Madam
 8 Chair, and, of course, good morning to each and every
 9 one of y'all. It's -- it's an honor to be here amongst
 10 the Border Trade Advisory Committee, a committee of
 11 which I served on, I think, for a little over six years,
 12 serving when I served as mayor for the City of Eagle
 13 Pass not too long ago.
 14 So it's good to -- to see, of course, my
 15 counterpart here from our sister county here in Webb
 16 County, and, of course, my great colleagues from Eagle
 17 Pass Mayor Salinas, from Del Rio Mayor Arreola, and here
 18 in Laredo Mayor Trevino, it's wonderful to be, of
 19 course, in your company and providing what is a -- a
 20 great opportunity to continue what is the growth and
 21 development of the Texas/Mexico border, which I do
 22 believe is one of the greatest priorities that we have
 23 as a state, and the robustness that we have to continue
 24 growing and to continue providing what is the economic
 25 feasi- -- or economic abilities to continue providing

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1 for more forward, not only the residents of Texas, but
 2 also for -- throughout the nation, which is something
 3 that we must continue working towards on enhancing and
 4 ensuring that we can do that.
 5 So it is by far great to see everyone here
 6 today and to move forward with today's presentation on
 7 behalf -- today I'm -- I'm here as Maverick County Judge
 8 to speak on some -- some projects, but more than
 9 anything to support, of course, the work that the City
 10 of Eagle Pass is also doing with the work that is
 11 ongoing with the ports of entry.
 12 I want to commend the City of Eagle Pass
 13 system through its work that has been done to enhance
 14 what is travel and trade in Eagle Pass and as we look
 15 towards the future continue growing in order to making
 16 that a greater possibility.
 17 So let me make sure that I'm tech savvy
 18 here. And which button am I supposed to press? Mayor,
 19 which one was that?
 20 MAYOR SALINAS: That little arrow -- the
 21 arrow the side, it's there somewhere?
 22 COUNTY JUDGE CANTU: Is that good?
 23 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: Is there a
 24 12-year in the room?
 25 COUNTY JUDGE CANTU: Yeah. That's true.

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1 Give me an iPhone and I can work it, but don't give me
 2 this. There we go. There we go. Perfect. Might be
 3 out of the -- the zoom there.
 4 But to continue, the purpose of my
 5 presentation here today is to express my interest in
 6 continuing to work with everyone here to tackle the many
 7 challenges that have been posed by the current state of
 8 our border infrastructure and arrive at obviously what
 9 would be common sense solutions that benefit our border
 10 community as a whole. I would like to work with you to
 11 identify some keen opportunities that can be extremely
 12 beneficial to our communities on the Texas/Mexico
 13 border, and today I would like to specifically share
 14 with you the vision of one of our local entrepreneurs
 15 who has been presenting -- or who has presented us with
 16 a novel, effective and timely opportunity that is
 17 definitely worth considering amongst this particular
 18 committee.
 19 Now, let me please start by stating that
 20 no one knows border infrastructure more than all of us
 21 who here are sitting here at this -- at this table. The
 22 challenges and needs are great and the demand to fix
 23 these challenges is something that we must come to a
 24 solution with. You-all are subject matter experts who
 25 fully understand the border infrastructure and trade

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1 with Mexico, particularly. As you know, our own
 2 Texas/Mexico border transportation plan provides us with
 3 a full 360-degree view of the state of our border
 4 infrastructure. The author shared meaningful
 5 observations and recommendations designed to improve
 6 upon what we have today. In sharing their observations
 7 the authors of the plan point to three main themes that
 8 are very startlingly detailed to the current state of
 9 our border infrastructure.
 10 Now, for their first theme on this, the
 11 authors assert that continued growth of population,
 12 trade and personal travel demand -- has outpaced
 13 investments in border wide multimodal transportation
 14 infrastructure. The bottom line here is that we have
 15 fallen behind and that we have been unable to keep the
 16 pace with the demand. The most troubling thing about
 17 this fact is that we are already behind while facing
 18 sharp increases in demand and the continued growth is
 19 being felt -- and this is throughout the border, and
 20 what is worse is that we know that more trade volume --
 21 volume is definitely coming our way.
 22 The authors also point out to the many
 23 negative effects of our inefficient border
 24 infrastructure which is creating for us. They clearly
 25 indicate, and I quote, that the border efficiencies have

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1 resulted in increasing border crossing themes -- times,
 2 corridor and local congestion, safety hot spots,
 3 deferred maintenance and connectivity gaps especially
 4 within the last mile of the border. This is most
 5 troubling because what this means is that the border
 6 communities are being left to deal with the negative
 7 implications of inadequate border infrastructure without
 8 the advantage of practical solutions. As always the
 9 communities that are right there on the Texas/Mexico
 10 border are the ones that are facing and being hit with
 11 the most. Now, this is impacting our health, safety,
 12 and economic well-being throughout our entire border
 13 community.

14 Finally, the third and perhaps the most
 15 important theme is the one that is actually within our
 16 control. It is the dire warning that, and I quote,
 17 again, if not addressed these issues could undermine
 18 future economic prosperity and impact quality of life in
 19 the Texas/Mexico Border Regions and beyond. Now, what
 20 this means to us as leaders is, our respective border
 21 communities is that we will be to blame if we do not act
 22 proactively to solve these very real challenges and
 23 embrace every opportunity that we can to improve upon
 24 what we have. And this is the entire border that we are
 25 basing this on.

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1 I speak closely, of course, to the issues
 2 that are being faced in the Maverick County, but, in
 3 other words, the experts are saying that our border
 4 transportation infrastructure is inadequate,
 5 inefficient, that this is having a significant negative
 6 health, safety and economic impact that may be exclusive
 7 to our border communities, and since we rely -- rely
 8 heavily on cross border trade, which is critical to our
 9 economic well-being, we will be sale -- setting
 10 ourselves back as a Border Region if we fail to act
 11 together to protect cross border trade and demand
 12 improved border transportation and infrastructure. This
 13 includes working together to seize all viable
 14 opportunities that accelerate the pace of border
 15 infrastructure development and encouraging both public
 16 and private projects alike.

17 Now, we've all seen this map and, as you
 18 know, like in every other border community in Texas
 19 Maverick County is situated in a strategic location.
 20 That can be leveraged at high-impact border
 21 infrastructure that will help facilitate trade and
 22 improve the economic condition of our region
 23 consequently of our state.

24 Now, Piedras Negras and Maverick County
 25 will benefit greatly from new border infrastructure that

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1 can help prepare us to take full advantage of the
 2 anticipated growth in cross border trade. The Port of
 3 Eagle Pass is already well established ranking fifth out
 4 of the United States 450-some ports in terms of trade
 5 with Mexico and it is truly commendable of all that has
 6 been done on the port's side from -- from Eagle Pass.
 7 We continue to see that port growing are in -- are in --
 8 and in -- and we are in complete support of the
 9 continued projects that will continue to expand on the
 10 efforts of the expansions to the international bridge 2
 11 and anything that comes along with the first
 12 international bridge. Now the port is currently No. 2
 13 by rail tonnage and is projected to become No. 1 by
 14 2050.

15 Now, if you look closely at this other
 16 figure from the master plan, you will note the dots that
 17 are in orange. You'll have to look pretty closely on
 18 that -- on that screen. You may see it better on this
 19 one.

20 So these are commercial lands ports of
 21 entry that you will see that Maverick County has two.
 22 But one interesting observation and, perhaps, the best
 23 indicator and reason for the strong Rio Grande Valley
 24 regional economy is that the RGV has a significant
 25 amount of commercial border crossings. From this, one

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1 can infer that commercial border crossings are good for
 2 local economies. We see that in all of our communities
 3 across the border and I praise and support my colleagues
 4 from the RGV for their early vision and determination to
 5 continue building such and an impressive -- to have an
 6 impressive and robust border infrastructure for their
 7 respective communities and this is exactly what I
 8 envision for our region as well.

9 I believe that we need new and improved
 10 border crossings in Maverick County to add to our
 11 capacity and consequently help facilitate trade and
 12 improve our economy, which is, of course, supportive to
 13 the measures and to the efforts of the City of Eagle
 14 Pass.

15 Now, that's why I would like to share with
 16 you one such opportunity that has been brought to our
 17 office that -- at Maverick County by Mr. Ruben Garibay.
 18 Now, Mr. Garibay is an expert in cross border trade and
 19 has figured out a way to add more capacity to our border
 20 infrastructure in Maverick County. This project is
 21 called Puerto Verde and it contemplates a bi-national
 22 industrial park in excess of over 15,000 acres on both
 23 sides of the border and a new international land port of
 24 entry for commercial traffic. At this time I would like
 25 to show a real quick video, a short video, that explains

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1 the project in general terms.
 2 (WHEREUPON, video was played.)
 3 COUNTY JUDGE CANTU: Okay. Let's get this
 4 here back to our screen.
 5 (Applause.)
 6 COUNTY JUDGE CANTU: Now, with that,
 7 Madam Secretary, as we continue to get back on track
 8 here, Puerto Verde is optimally located, of course, to
 9 serve the growing nearshoring demand. Proximity to the
 10 border is becoming increasingly -- just increasingly
 11 important due to the raising transportation costs when
 12 selecting a desirable nearshoring location.
 13 Furthermore, proximity to other major manufacturing hubs
 14 such as Monterrey, Saltillo and Torreon is also
 15 important for supply chain efficiencies. Puerto Verde's
 16 location near the border and other major manufacturing
 17 hubs combined with favorable business initiatives in the
 18 Mexican State of Coahuila make it the ideal location for
 19 nearshoring respectively.
 20 Now, Puerto Verde's intermodal bridge will
 21 improve transportation efficiency and assist the region
 22 in maintaining its preferred status for bi-national
 23 trade. As you can see here precisely on the map and
 24 where we can see just to give an indication, which I
 25 know you-all from the respective committee, those

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1 members who have, have had the opportunity to tour what
 2 is Constellation Brands, you-all can pretty much --
 3 which I'm sure everybody remembers some -- they
 4 pretty -- y'all pretty much had, I'm sure, some -- a
 5 couple of Coronas when y'all traveled into -- into Nava
 6 and Piedras Negras from -- from that particular area.
 7 Seeing the importance of all of this going on, from
 8 Puerto Verde Nava to what would be considered the
 9 overall bridge itself the ideal, of course, location
 10 is -- is in its -- location is this key here.
 11 So just to provide an overview of the
 12 proposed plan for this new international land port of
 13 entry, this would also, of course, include the numerous
 14 acres that are -- that are encompassing what is the
 15 industry park on both sides of the Texas/Mexico border.
 16 Now, Eagle Pass will also become a key
 17 junction point along the USMCA corridor connecting
 18 Mexico's new Mazatlan seaport to the U -- to the US and
 19 to Canada, respectively. The USMCA corridor is and
 20 enticing alternative to the Panama Canal and other
 21 western seaports the roughly 80 percent of the U.S.
 22 population that lives on the eastern portion of the
 23 country. On the other side of the border, the State of
 24 Coahuila is also heavily investing in improvements to
 25 MX-57 and already owns bypass around Piedras Negras that

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1 will be utilized by this particular project in question.
 2 Now, in regards to this, of course, Puerto
 3 Verde's advantages to the general public would be that
 4 developer is providing private funding, the high impact
 5 of border crossings, the high efficiency inspection and
 6 next generation technology. This would obviously be
 7 a -- a green port in -- in such to make sure that the
 8 technology that is required in order to do the pro- --
 9 the -- the processing of inspections at a faster rate
 10 and to provide what is the necessary abilities for the
 11 business community to take full advantage of for its
 12 continued growth and development.
 13 And finally, of course, obviously this is
 14 not the forum to get into the details, but I would like
 15 to point out that Puerto Verde squarely aligns with the
 16 Border Trade Master Plan recommendations from mobility
 17 and reliability to new technologies to connectivity to
 18 sustainable funding, more than anything the stewardship
 19 and sustainability that is required within the
 20 recommendations that are given within the particular
 21 plan itself that is -- that is -- that is currently
 22 on -- on file.
 23 Now, in our own words, of course, I think
 24 that what I can say is that the benefits of this new
 25 facility, including the development of the industrial

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1 parks, the development of a new port for the increased
 2 traffic and trade, particularly, are, of course,
 3 something that will continue to support the growing
 4 demand of the needs of the Texas/Mexico border.
 5 Commercial trade is something that is
 6 crucial to the growth and development of the areas and
 7 we want to make sure that we can address any and all
 8 future challenges proactively with ways that can
 9 definitely be beneficial for our communities, especially
 10 counties and cities that are working to meet the high
 11 demands that are coming forth from meeting the
 12 international trade and travel that is coming through
 13 our current ports of entry.
 14 So with that, Madam Secretary, if there
 15 are any questions I'll be happy to entertain those. I
 16 know that also with me -- joining me today is
 17 Mr. Garibay that can also answer any particular
 18 questions that may -- may be posed from this particular
 19 committee.
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Excellent.
 21 Any questions? Comments? Thank you --
 22 COUNTY JUDGE CANTU: Very well.
 23 SECRETARY NELSON: -- very much.
 24 COUNTY JUDGE CANTU: Thank you,
 25 Madam Secretary.

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1 SECRETARY NELSON: The Chair --
 2 MR. CANALES: Ma'am?
 3 SECRETARY NELSON: I'm so sorry.
 4 MR. CANALES: I would like --
 5 SECRETARY NELSON: Go ahead.
 6 MR. CANALES: -- to -- I was late on
 7 raising my hand.
 8 SECRETARY NELSON: That's all right.
 9 Raise it high. Go ahead.
 10 MR. CANALES: I -- I -- I have some
 11 comments. I -- I hear about this project about two and
 12 a half years ago. Oh, my name is Greg Canales.
 13 I -- I heard this project about two and
 14 half years ago when I was advising -- really three --
 15 when I was advising the Durango state government and the
 16 Sinaloa state government about it. And -- and it is a
 17 dream, and my father used to say, Greg, life is full of
 18 dreams, yes, it is true in order for them to happen.
 19 But in order to that to hap- -- this project to happen
 20 you need to align not only the three levels of
 21 government on the U.S. side, but also the three levels
 22 of government on the Mexican side, which includes the
 23 government of the state of Sinaloa, Durango, Chihuahua
 24 or Coahuila to make it happen. Plus you need to align
 25 the -- the private sector, the people from those

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1 communities and the right-of-ways for those to happen,
 2 and finally the investors who will put the money on it.
 3 It's not an easy task. It is not an easy task. I've
 4 seen some other ports to fail on attracting business to
 5 them and one of them is right here in Texas and it's
 6 called the Port of Corpus Christi.
 7 The Port of Corpus Christi has been going
 8 to Monterrey since 1980s to promote the use of the Port
 9 of Corpus Christi for the Monterrey businesses versus
 10 using Houston which is farther away than --
 11 SECRETARY NELSON: Can we kind of stick to
 12 his topic?
 13 MR. CANALES: Yeah. But I'm just going to
 14 pro- -- come up with this.
 15 In that promotion they have been promoting
 16 that and is -- the promotion fails for very simple
 17 reasons. If I'm going to send a container to the Port
 18 of Corpus Christi and I -- for whatever reason, I miss
 19 the boat, I miss the vessel, when that container will be
 20 next shipped and if it's a week it's not good. In the
 21 case of Port of Houston it will be a few hours later.
 22 So it is very difficult to jump out a new port. That is
 23 what I had to say. And I hope we can do this -- do this
 24 project, but it takes a lot of effort and time. Thank
 25 you.

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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Other?
 2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam Secretary,
 3 quickly, I'd just like to add to Mr. Canales comments
 4 is, in Coahuila and in Eagle Pass, Piedras Negras and
 5 Acuna and Del Rio we do have a dream, and we are all
 6 very united on both sides of the border. We have very
 7 competent people, we have leadership, we have private
 8 investment and we are working really hard to make it a
 9 reality and -- and I think that it can happen.
 10 And, you know, I really believe that
 11 sometimes there are dreams that nobody else can see but
 12 some people, and they -- and you take a chance on it and
 13 they do become reality. Thank you.
 14 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Any other
 15 questions? All righty then.
 16 All right. The chair recognizes Mayor Al
 17 Arreola from the City of Del Rio, please.
 18 MAYOR ARREOLA: Madam Secretary, it's an
 19 honor being here with you today and, Caroline Mays,
 20 thank you for having us here from the City of Del Rio.
 21 Distinguished guests, it's a real honor to have both
 22 sides of the bridge (the Mexican side and the United
 23 States) sitting at the table to put the thoughts
 24 together to improve both sides of the bridge, which
 25 is -- to me, is something that I -- when I was in the --

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1 actually running for this position as mayor thought that
 2 it was something possible, that we can collaborate with
 3 both sides of the bridge and join both forces to become
 4 united and become one strong -- border towns.
 5 I'm here with my colleague next door to me
 6 Mr. Salinas (Mayor Salinas) we -- we have a great
 7 cooperation, Judge Ramsey, we're working on something
 8 stronger within the City of Del Rio and the City of
 9 Eagle Pass and both counties working together.
 10 But my name is Al Arreola, I am the actual
 11 current mayor of the City of Del Rio, I just got elected
 12 a year ago. I was actually born in -- in Coahuila, I'm
 13 a Coahuilense. I'm the first Coahuilense mayor in the
 14 City of Del Rio, which is an honor, and, you know, I --
 15 I do represent a sleepy little giant, a little city
 16 that's 152 miles away from San Antonio, it's 177 miles
 17 away from Laredo and we've been kind of sleeping there
 18 waiting for everything to grow around us, and I think
 19 we're ready for that potential and the growth that we're
 20 going to do.
 21 Our base -- our little city there has our
 22 base Laughlin Air Force Base, which trains some of the
 23 best pilots in the United States and the world. We also
 24 have a lake that is sufficient to anybody that goes
 25 fishing and we -- kind of like some of our water goes



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1 all the way down to y'all down this way. So we don't
 2 hold to our waters. I think that's something that --
 3 that the city has is water.
 4 But besides that, we do have our -- like I
 5 said, our base that injects \$250 million into our -- our
 6 assets and for our economy. We're gradually growing.
 7 But one of the things that I -- you know, our city has
 8 made this -- actually we came out on TV with the
 9 immigrational problems, well, that kind of made us -- a
 10 lot of cities outside of the city of -- of the state
 11 focus on Del Rio. So now everybody wants to come into
 12 the City of Del Rio to start economic growth and
 13 everything.
 14 So we're very proud, our city is a real
 15 jewel. It's -- it's something that we're -- like I said
 16 earlier, it's a sleeping little giant that's going to
 17 wake up. We're not into the position of everybody else
 18 right now, but I think we -- we're growing and -- and
 19 we're going to get there. I'm as bad as Judge Ramsey
 20 with this thing. Okay. And I just introduced this, but
 21 our -- our economic boost has been working gradually.
 22 We have established new businesses: We
 23 started up with Texas Roadhouse; we have 5Below;
 24 Teriyaki Homes; we have the -- you know, Charlie's.
 25 We -- in the year of 2022 we -- we had 450 new jobs with

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1 \$38 million invested into our economy. The year 2023 we
 2 are -- we're predicting 500 jobs or more with
 3 \$45 million investment into our economy.
 4 But our pride right now that we have is
 5 that we're working on our Port-of-Plains Corridor and I
 6 think our -- our EDC Director Jorge Ramon, who is here
 7 today, and my -- our city manager went to Mexico and
 8 presented the case to our port -- actual port of entry.
 9 We are -- there has -- we've been preparing for
 10 Port-of-Plains for 20 years. I see somebody stated in a
 11 few minute ago if you have it -- reality could come, you
 12 know, and -- and I think that's what we've been in Del
 13 Rio. We've been pushing it, pushing it.
 14 Every time we go two or three steps
 15 forward we get -- you know, we go back with one because
 16 somebody says we can't do it, but we keep on the
 17 continuation of the vision and the dreams, and the
 18 dreams are always there and we have to keep on it. You
 19 know, it's like I told my -- you know, City of Del Rio,
 20 yeah, it's not going to come overnight, but if we
 21 continue with the same vision and keep that rolling, the
 22 next mayor or the next judge that comes in keeps the
 23 vision rolling instead of waiting and pushing it
 24 backwards so we can begin the process of building the
 25 second international bridge.

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1 Right now we're in the negotiations on --
 2 on the properties, the route. We've been dealing with
 3 TxDOT. We've been dealing with -- you know, our -- our
 4 consultants have been heavy going out there. We're
 5 in -- probably on the 75 percent of the actual
 6 completion there and we'll be presenting it to our
 7 constituents. You know, the -- there is so many things
 8 that are happening that we're so proud in our community.
 9 And -- and mind you this is my first
 10 presentation that I'm doing on this. Normally I send
 11 Jorge.
 12 Our infrastructure project -- and this
 13 started two years ago. Our EDC Board really decided
 14 that, you know, our traffic was growing from 250 trucks
 15 to 300 to 400 and we figured, okay, what would be the
 16 best solution right now so we can solve it. So we
 17 injected \$2.5 million into a secondary -- two commercial
 18 lanes that are going to push the trucks.
 19 I think Mayor Salinas next to me has
 20 mentioned that we are one of the safest border towns. I
 21 think everybody is safe, it's just the process of
 22 getting the trucks across and this is where we're
 23 gaining. I think it's 20-30 minutes to crossing up
 24 there and we're upgrading all of the facilities at our
 25 international port of entry. Our Mexican side is doing

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1 the same thing. They're -- they're widening their --
 2 the actual intakes for the vehicles. So everything
 3 is -- is kind of fitted into it.
 4 Flexibility started. We already started
 5 on 24 -- 2014. We are, you know, understanding the --
 6 the study, Phase II we started in 2017. We are up to
 7 getting the presidential permit, the service, the
 8 studies, everything is there. We're on Phase III
 9 hopefully in 2022, the right-of-way to the destination.
 10 We're trying to get it done this year, because, you
 11 know, I've only got three more years and I want to see
 12 everything grow and get into it and -- and then leave
 13 that legacy to the next mayor that comes in.
 14 Our actual infrastructure that we have
 15 right now that is -- is very heavily used from
 16 Eagle Pass to San Angelo to San Antonio is Loop 79
 17 that -- that is infrastructure that is used daily, a lot
 18 of commercial trucks go through there. We are in the
 19 process of actually beginning the -- the actual
 20 development on that area, and we're working, you know,
 21 to improve that, also, our Interstate 317 which is a
 22 designation which stands connected to the preceding 79
 23 was provided there. Loop 79 improved the entrance to
 24 Del Rio city limits where it's an interchange into
 25 U.S. 90, like I stated a few minutes ago, and it -- it

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1 is used daily.
 2 Infrastructure projects. We're -- we're
 3 actually doing a lot of improvements in the downtown.
 4 One of the things that when -- when I went to Austin on
 5 lobby days -- wishing they told us this -- if your heart
 6 of the city is vibrant and growing and -- and pumping
 7 the rest of the city will grow with it. So we are
 8 really working on our downtown to be rejuvenated. We
 9 have -- from restaurants to bars to, you know, even our
 10 city hall.
 11 When I first came in they said they wanted
 12 to build a brand new city hall. I said, Okay. But
 13 we're going to do it downtown. Because if we have our
 14 city hall downtown that is going to show the community,
 15 and any investors that come in, that the heart is
 16 pumping and that it's pumping blood to the outer --
 17 outer -- outer arteries of the city. So we started on
 18 that.
 19 We're doing our theaters. Downtown,
 20 Secretary, is -- is awesome. All of it is -- is
 21 really -- I invite you, you know, all the dignitaries
 22 from Eagle Pass, Laredo, one of these days I -- I'll go
 23 open the doors for a nice place to have our visit so
 24 you-all can come and see this -- this small little
 25 sleepy city that you guys will fall in-love. The

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1 community's so friendly and -- and vibrant to anybody
 2 that comes in.
 3 We're also working -- we just finished our
 4 field of dreams which is a sports complex for our kids.
 5 That took quite a -- a big chunk of money and -- and it
 6 took about five to ten years to get it all squared off,
 7 but we done it. We're -- we're not as -- as fast and
 8 growing as -- as Eagle Pass, but we're touching their
 9 toes and -- and we're working in good collaboration. So
 10 that is another thing. And we're working on our bike
 11 and hike trails, we're working on different things to
 12 bring in.
 13 But one of the things that we're really --
 14 it -- it's our trade numbers, it's 180,520 cars and
 15 pickup average per month in 2023, that's the average and
 16 we're going to do it, with 8,236 commercial average per
 17 month. Our port of entry is really super busy and --
 18 and we're -- I already -- I grew our first port of
 19 entries and so our next vision is to do our second one.
 20 It's working in collaboration with both
 21 governments -- the Mexican government, our Alcalde
 22 Emilio De Hoyos is -- is -- is really working and in
 23 really great communication with us and we meet every
 24 three months to discuss where we're at.
 25 On the Coahuila side, they -- they're

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1 already touching toes with everything that we have
 2 started on our -- on our Texas side, on our Del Rio
 3 side. But we have these sessions. I think we've
 4 already had three or four sessions where we all meet
 5 there in Del Rio and Ciudad Acuna. The same dignitaries
 6 from Acuna have gone to Mexico and presented our second
 7 bridge and the infrastructure that we're doing on both
 8 sides. So it -- it is an awesome presenta- -- you know,
 9 collaboration. We -- we are very excited that Del Rio
 10 is a new destination.
 11 We're not going to compete against Laredo.
 12 We're not going to compete against El Paso, but I think
 13 Del Rio is on the verge, along with Maverick County, to
 14 bust out and really support the next commercial trucks
 15 that need to go as fast as possible to the United States
 16 and Canada. Maverick County and -- and Val Verde
 17 County, I think those are the next port of entries that
 18 are going to help and support all -- and alleviate all
 19 the congestion and everything that's going to come
 20 through, you know, Mexico into the United States. I
 21 think that's one of the key things that we're looking
 22 at.
 23 On our city we're -- we're excited that
 24 we're invited to the table to hear this and to really
 25 listen to all of the brains around here so we can all

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1 work together and -- and support the visionists to put
 2 jobs and the quality of life to everybody that's in the
 3 state of Texas and Mexico. So I thank you, Madam Chair,
 4 Secretary, for inviting me. It is an honor. It is an
 5 eye opener for me.
 6 I actually sell diamonds for a living, but
 7 this is a -- this is a hobby for me. You know, I --
 8 I've been -- I work for Zales for 45 -- actually
 9 44 years right now. I don't know if I'm going to make
 10 my 45th year because I'm involved in this more than my
 11 actual store, so -- but it -- it's -- it's been a -- an
 12 actual blessing. I -- I've been listening around the
 13 table to every idea and -- and it's something that we
 14 can all collaborate and work together and I think the
 15 vision of -- of the state of Texas, being where we're at
 16 I think the state of Texas is No. 1, you know, in -- in
 17 economics, and I think if we can stay together and --
 18 and collaborate with our Mexican colleagues I think we
 19 can move everything forward. I appreciate it,
 20 Madam Chair.
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 22 (Applause.)
 23 SECRETARY NELSON: Excellent presentation.
 24 And -- and I'm ready to do a trade mission to Del Rio.
 25 MAYOR ARREOLA: Well, we're inviting you



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1 to the City of Del Rio.

2 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Thank you.

3 MAYOR ARREOLA: So you can go taste some

4 of the best wine in the state of Texas.

5 SECRETARY NELSON: He knows me so well.

6 Thank you. We're ready.

7 Any questions?

8 Next, I'd like to recognize Gene Lindgren

9 on behalf of the Laredo Economic Development Foundation.

10 Where is Gene?

11 MR. LINDGREN: I'm right here,

12 Madam Secretary.

13 SECRETARY NELSON: There you are front and

14 center.

15 MR. LINDGREN: Thank you so much.

16 Apparently I have a dead mic. I'm going to scoot over

17 two seats here.

18 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Pass it on down.

19 There you are.

20 MR. LINDGREN: Thank you.

21 So thank you again for the opportunity to

22 participate in this panel. And it's an honor to be here

23 with BTAC, and -- and Madam Secretary, welcome to

24 Laredo.

25 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.

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1 MR. LINDGREN: Again, I'm the president of

2 the Laredo Economic Development Corporation and if

3 you'll indulge me for a minute I'd like to give a brief

4 overview of LEDC and Laredo and public sector

5 infrastructure. Apparently I have a dead remote here,

6 too. Oh, there we go. I have to do this. So I'll

7 spend a minute or two on each of these topics. I think

8 I'll get us back on track.

9 So I'd like to talk about the LEDC and the

10 Laredo Region overview, a little bit on public

11 infrastructure from my point of view. But certainly

12 TxDOT are the experts and so we'll let them talk about

13 that. A perspective on global trade in Laredo; private

14 sector infrastructure commentary; and then a little bit

15 about our prospects and trends in our -- in our main

16 activity.

17 And so the LEDC our humble little home,

18 it's mi casa es tu casa, and it's just a mile or two

19 from here on the base of the -- of the airport, and so a

20 brief overview of the LEDC is a private nonprofit

21 dedicated to promote and foster the economic and

22 industrial development of the Laredo Region and that

23 includes our friends in -- in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas

24 and Colombia, Nuevo Leon and the entire Webb County as

25 well.

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1 We are a data resource center. We attract

2 and nurture prospects. We provide incentives liaison

3 facilitation, arrange and conduct site tours and -- and

4 our board, myself and some of our staff are extensively

5 involved in the community with advocacy.

6 Now, in -- sorry. Come on. You can do

7 it. There we go. In Laredo we do pride ourselves on

8 many things: Our food, our bi-national culture, our

9 history, our professional sports teams like the

10 Tecolotes de los Dos Laredos, the Laredo Heat soccer

11 club, and certainly our -- our supply chain leadership

12 not just in -- in -- in the region but in the world.

13 But we have an X factor and what may set us apart -- and

14 I imagine it's similar in some of the other border

15 communities -- is our great relationships we have

16 between the public and private sectors and economic

17 development ecosystem.

18 Come on. There we go.

19 And so these relationships extend beyond

20 the logos that are shown on the screen. We have the key

21 players in economic development, many are in this room;

22 the public and private sector banks (IBC certainly leads

23 the charge), landowners, developers, commercial real

24 estate firms, utility companies, trade groups, Chamber

25 of Commerce, Laredo College, Texas A&M International

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1 University, Workforce Solutions South Texas and, as

2 mentioned, city, county, federal government, and -- and

3 also our bi-national counterparts I failed to mention,

4 Customs & Border Protection, TxDOT and others. And so

5 again that X factor that continues to provide us

6 feedback when we have delegations and potential

7 investors we roll out the red carpet in a -- similar to

8 this and we continue to receive those accolades.

9 Eddie, I'm going to try this here. My

10 goodness. There we go.

11 Okay. So again, TxDOT will probably

12 correct me or provide fresher information when they

13 speak, but the impact of Nearshoring, re-shoring, ally

14 shoring, whatever shoring you want to pick --

15 Licenciado, thank you for that joke earlier -- place a

16 huge role in the development of our regions' development

17 in both the public and private sector, and, of course,

18 they need to complement each other.

19 The public infrastructure project, es- --

20 especially those related to freight and mobility are

21 preparing to catch up to the extreme level of growth

22 that we're going to enjoy, and in many cases, and I'll

23 say this nicely, trying to catch up with our current

24 needs.

25 The latest information that we -- that we

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1 receive from TxDOT and RMA and our infrastructure
 2 counterparts shows that there will be almost one -- did
 3 I say this right? -- \$1 billion worth of infrastructure
 4 projects in and around the community that are either in
 5 construction or will be in construction within the next
 6 four years.

7 And when I mentioned I was going to be on
 8 this panel, Gerry Schwebel wanted me to point out two
 9 things and I will point out both of those right now.

10 Laredo will be the only city with the gateway to four
 11 interstate highways. That's something that's --

12 SECRETARY NELSON: That's --

13 MR. LINDGREN: -- not just a bragging
 14 point --

15 SECRETARY NELSON: We should bedazzle it.

16 MR. LINDGREN: -- it will be a true game
 17 changer for the competitiveness of North America and
 18 maybe the western hemisphere.

19 And secondly, we are the No. 1 port.
 20 We -- we say in the -- not just land port for February
 21 month to date, we were the No. 1 port in the -- the
 22 U.S. I -- I beg anybody to argue with me if I say the
 23 No. 1 port in the world.

24 SECRETARY NELSON: That would look good on
 25 a t-shirt.

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1 MR. CANALES: No argument.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bedazzled.

3 MR. LINDGREN: Yeah.

4 SECRETARY NELSON: Bedazzled.

5 MR. LINDGREN: And so some of you may
 6 recognize this slide, it -- it's from the Border Trade
 7 Master Plan, and it does show the historical growth over
 8 the past.

9 Now, why do we need more in additional and
 10 faster infrastructure projects? Well, I'll tell you why
 11 in -- in -- over the course of the next two slides. The
 12 historical data of commercial crossings in Port Laredo
 13 over the last ten years has been around 4 percent growth
 14 per year. Now, keep in mind that the U.S. population
 15 grows at less than 1 percent per year.

16 Okay. So the Texas/Mexico Border
 17 Transportation Master Plan shows that commercial
 18 crossings will double; using 2019 as a baseline it will
 19 double by 2033 and triple by 2055. That's impressive.
 20 Another source reinforcing the same commercial growth
 21 data shows that the crossings will go from roughly
 22 16,000 to over 44,000 in 2050. We are already seeing
 23 growth ahead of the curve.

24 In the year 2021, the second bar from the
 25 right, Laredo enjoyed \$248 billion worth of global

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1 trade. Last year there was a 20 percent increase in
 2 that. And now that total cannot be explained with --
 3 from inflation. Maybe a portion of it. But we're
 4 seeing it in the -- in the -- in the truck volumes,
 5 the -- the rail car volumes, and then, of course, in
 6 the -- in the global trade volumes that are in the
 7 billions.

8 And so what are we doing in the private
 9 sector?

10 Okay. So I'd like to point out the top
 11 five industrial parks. We've been working hard with the
 12 private sector community, landowners and developers, for
 13 them to invest in the land in the horizontal development
 14 and -- and push end-users also vertical developers to
 15 start making -- and we support the not build a sue
 16 (phonetic), but perspective of vertical development.
 17 And so in just the -- the top five largest active new
 18 industrial parks in -- in Laredo we have over
 19 8,000 acres of development going on.

20 And to put that in -- into perspective,
 21 the information that we gathered from -- from -- from
 22 commercial real estate reps and -- and public
 23 information -- we're not divulging anything that -- that
 24 the developers and commercial real estate doesn't want
 25 to be divulged -- there will be over -- this is

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1 impressive -- 10 million square feet of new industrial
 2 space, mostly, obviously, warehousing and distribution
 3 centers, but that's impressive over the next few years.
 4 Our current basis is around 43 million; this will be
 5 adding 10 million. That's impressive.

6 So the LEDC is -- again it's a private
 7 sector entity for our community that works for the tract
 8 leads, lure developers and end-users to open up shop in
 9 Laredo, either local expansions or nonlocal or national
 10 or international developers, companies that we try to
 11 attract to relocate or expand in Laredo. So we are on
 12 the front line. Our pipeline of projects reflects the
 13 predicted growth for nearshoring/reshoring and we are
 14 working to attract users to fill those new facilities
 15 that will be coming online.

16 The number of prospect leads over the last
 17 two years has grown more than 50 percent, and our site
 18 visits -- and that's where companies are to put money on
 19 the line flying to Laredo, we host them, we tour them
 20 around, we set up meetings. Our -- our site visits are
 21 up over a hundred percent over the last two years and
 22 that's an indication of future landed projects and we're
 23 on the verge of several.

24 Now, certainly many of the prospect leads
 25 Laredo offer warehousing and distribution and a growing



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1 cold chain sector, but a number of significant -- a
 2 number of interested parties include manufacturing
 3 facilities; something that will be relatively new to our
 4 Laredo, Texas community. These include industries in
 5 the area of rubber, metal, renewable energy, automotive
 6 components, construction materials and more.
 7 Here we go.
 8 And the factors driving the interests are,
 9 of course, reshoring, potentially USMCA content
 10 requirements, and we have available land. We have a
 11 young talented workforce and we have a great location to
 12 support the North American market.
 13 So, Madam Secretary, thank you for the
 14 opportunity to participate in this panel.
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Any
 16 questions?
 17 (Applause.)
 18 SECRETARY NELSON: All right. Finally,
 19 the Chair recognizes Epi Gonzalez from the Texas
 20 Department of Transportation Laredo District Office to
 21 present.
 22 MR. GONZALEZ: Madam Secretary?
 23 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 24 MR. GONZALEZ: (Spanish spoken.)
 25 I'm Epi Gonzalez, I'm the Laredo District

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1 Engineer for TxDOT, and it's my pleasure to be here this
 2 morning to talk about transportation projects.
 3 Okay. Gene, you're going to have to help
 4 me out here.
 5 Okay. Before -- before I get started
 6 with -- with -- with my presentation I just want to --
 7 you know, it's customary for us here at TxDOT for us to
 8 talk about safety in all of our -- all -- in all of our
 9 meetings, right; and in honor of National Work Zone
 10 Awareness Week, I wanted to just remind everybody to --
 11 you know, to slow down, to not drive distracted, to, you
 12 know, be courteous, obey our signs, and -- and you'll
 13 get through our work zones safely, right? We have over
 14 3,300 work zones at any given time across our state,
 15 right, so -- so again, for the safety of the traveling
 16 public and obviously for the safety of our own
 17 workers -- so we urge you to -- you know, to follow --
 18 follow the signs and -- and obey the signs and -- and --
 19 and slow down. So, thank you -- thank you for that
 20 and -- and please share that message with everybody.
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: Very good message.
 22 MR. GONZALEZ: So we heard a -- a few -- I
 23 guess, a few references to arteries and, I guess,
 24 medical terms, I guess, some of our elected officials
 25 have medical backgrounds so -- so one of the things --

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1 and -- and this map kind of shows, I guess, a little bit
 2 of that, right? And so this shows the four interstates
 3 that Gene just mentioned a little while ago that
 4 originate here in -- in Laredo, which is Interstate 2,
 5 Interstate 69W, Interstate 35, and the new
 6 Interstate 27.
 7 So I'm going to talk a little bit about
 8 Laredo District, give you some statistics. So -- so
 9 just to kind of give everybody a -- a reference of -- so
 10 we're -- we're one of 25 districts for the state of
 11 Texas. We comprise -- we are comprised of eight
 12 counties. So we're comprised of Duval, Webb, LaSalle,
 13 Dimmit, Maverick, Zavala, Kinney and Val Verde County.
 14 So these are the counties that -- that make up the
 15 Laredo District. So we -- overall we have a little bit
 16 over 5,000 lane miles; we have about 8.3 million daily
 17 vehicle miles; we have over 350 registered vehicles; we
 18 have over 1,000 bridges, almost 900 on system; and
 19 almost 200 off system; we have eight border crossings
 20 and two international rail -- railroad crossings.
 21 So we have the eight -- eight counties
 22 have a population of over 770,000 people -- that's based
 23 on 2020 census data -- and have an area of over 15,000
 24 square miles, and the Laredo District is made up of 261
 25 hardworking dedicated women and men.

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1 Okay. So just -- again, I just kind of
 2 wanted to show some of the projects or some of the
 3 things that we're working on when it comes to these four
 4 interstate systems that we have.
 5 So currently, obviously, I-35 is -- is one
 6 of our primary -- primary arteries, right; so we have
 7 numerous projects along I-35. We -- we're working to
 8 expand I-35 to six lanes between -- between Laredo and
 9 San Antonio or, at least, up to our county line in
 10 LaSalle. And, you know, right now, we're currently
 11 expanding also I-69 Bellevue. We have a project that's
 12 coming up later this summer where we're going to be
 13 adding -- expanding the freeway footprint of -- of
 14 U.S. 59. We also have a -- you know, working on
 15 developing, working with our TPP and administration on a
 16 feasibility study for I-27 as of the Ports-to-Plains
 17 initiative and, you know, that -- that feasibility study
 18 is going to be completed early next year and that's
 19 going to give us a -- a guide as far as what projects --
 20 you know, how to prior -- prioritize some of these
 21 projects that -- that we're going to be looking at. And
 22 obviously we're also working with -- with our
 23 counterparts in the Pharr District to -- to complete
 24 Interstate 2 between Laredo and the Port of Brownsville.
 25 And so one of the things that -- that's

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1 very important here is, you know, we're also working
 2 with Transportation Commissioner Alvin New, and, you
 3 know, one of the things that is very important for him
 4 is, you know, Interstate 27 and other statewide
 5 connectivity initiatives, and once we have -- once we
 6 have Interstate 27 and Interstate 2 completed that's
 7 going to connect 22 out of the 28 ports of entry for --
 8 for the Texas -- Texas/Mexico border. And obviously, we
 9 have solutions that are short, medium and -- and long
 10 range as well, right. So --
 11 All right. So in -- in addition to the --
 12 in addition to the interstates we're also working on --
 13 on U.S. 90 and U.S. 57. U.S. 90 connects Del Rio to --
 14 to I-35 so -- so we're working -- and as you can see
 15 from the map there's a portion within our district
 16 within Kinney County, and -- and -- but -- but the vast
 17 majority of that is within the San Antonio District.
 18 We're also working on U.S. 57, and U.S. 57, basically,
 19 connects Eagle Pass, again, to I-35, and the majority of
 20 U.S. 57 is within -- within our district. So -- Okay.
 21 There we go.
 22 All right. So now we'll -- we'll take a
 23 little bit deeper dive and -- and I'll talk a little bit
 24 about a project that we have out in construction here on
 25 I-35 and -- and I-69W and U.S. 59 which is our direct

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1 connector. This project has a construction cost of
 2 approximately \$150 million and we anticipate completion
 3 of this project by later on this year or early next year
 4 for it to be fully completed. So it's going to -- it's
 5 going to add, basically -- or improve I-35 from four to
 6 six lanes, main lanes between Shiloh and I-69. It's
 7 going to go over the Union Pacific Railroad currently,
 8 that -- that bridge is a -- was a -- had a very low
 9 vertical clearance so it impacted -- it impacted
 10 obviously commerce in the area. And we're also
 11 providing direct connectors between -- between I-69
 12 and -- and I-35.
 13 Another -- another few projects that we're
 14 working on are -- you know, are -- on 35, basically,
 15 have an estimated construction cost of approximately
 16 \$430 million. One of these projects is, basically, the
 17 Uniroyal Interchange replacement, along with a new
 18 Hachar-Reuthinger Interchange, and that project is
 19 coming up September of 2024 and it has an estimated
 20 construction cost at this time of approximately
 21 \$160 million.
 22 We're also going to be completing the two
 23 pending direct connectors, the direct connectors 3 and
 24 4, with an estimated cost of \$51 million, and that's
 25 going to be letting in November of 2025. And then we're

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1 going to be -- further north we're going to be widening
 2 and -- and replacing the Union Pacific under- --
 3 underpass with an overpass and we're going to be
 4 providing a direct connector from I-35 northbound to
 5 northbound U.S. 83, and that project we're anticipating
 6 letting in September of 2026 and it has a -- a cost of
 7 approximately \$220 million.
 8 So we -- we talked a little bit earlier
 9 about, I guess, the Ports-to-Plains, the U.S. 83 and
 10 U.S. 277, and there's -- there's a few projects that we
 11 currently have under construction currently and these
 12 projects are, basically -- you know, how we talked about
 13 short, medium and long-range projects, so -- so the --
 14 oops. I'm going the wrong way.
 15 Okay. So some of these projects,
 16 basically, are in to address safety and operational
 17 improvements, so we're -- we're reconstructing a good
 18 portion or -- or pretty much the entire portion of U.S.
 19 83 in Webb County, reconstructing and adding passing
 20 lanes to improve safety, and we're also looking at, you
 21 know, continuing that effort into -- in the county as
 22 well.
 23 Okay. So now we talk -- we get into a
 24 little bit of -- a little bit about, I guess, the future
 25 I-27 projects, right, that we're identifying that we're

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1 going to be working with -- with our TPP office on that
 2 feasibility study, and, basically, you know, we have 339
 3 out of the 400 miles so we -- we have a good chunk of
 4 that -- of that future interstate, right, and so we've
 5 identified, basically, 16 projects, you know, to address
 6 every -- everything within our district, including
 7 some -- some -- some of -- some relief routes around
 8 some of our communities in -- in -- in Maverick and --
 9 and Dimmit County. So -- so once we get the -- once we
 10 get that study we're going to be prioritizing some of
 11 that -- some of that work.
 12 All right. And I know we talked a little
 13 bit about -- about Eagle Pass, and -- and this is a
 14 project that we have, that's one of our most important
 15 projects that we have currently, is completing the State
 16 Loop 480. So right now the State Loop 480 is,
 17 basically, you know -- or the last segment of State
 18 Loop 480 is between U.S. 277 and -- and U.S. 57 so we
 19 have advanced that project. We -- we're pretty much
 20 complete as far as our plan, developing our engineering
 21 plans and right-of-way acquisitions so now it's just a
 22 matter of looking for -- for funding for that project,
 23 so -- so that's been one of our top priorities for --
 24 for 2024 UTP.
 25 All right. So I talked a little bit about

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1 also U.S. 57, right, Eagle Pass to I-35. So again,
 2 the -- the biggest portion is within the Laredo District
 3 so we're looking at basically upgrading U.S. 57 to a
 4 four-lane divided highway. So obviously, you know,
 5 there's a community (La Pryor) that -- that we're
 6 looking at, you know, either -- either going to expand
 7 the -- through that -- through that community or
 8 potentially looking at a relief route through there as
 9 well.

10 So we've broken up -- we've broken up,
 11 basically, our portion of U.S. 57 into -- into five
 12 projects. As you can see here, you know, it's -- it has
 13 a total cost of approximately \$1.2 billion. Obviously,
 14 we cannot -- we can all -- we cannot build all of that
 15 in -- in one -- in one -- in -- under one project so
 16 this is something, obviously, that's going to get phased
 17 in and -- and, obviously, we're going to continue
 18 working with our partners in the San Antonio District
 19 to -- to make sure that we're -- we're both, you know,
 20 constructing the project at the same time and -- and --
 21 and that's going to meet up at the same point, right.

22 All right. So now moving over to U.S. 90
 23 and Del Rio. Again, it's -- it's connecting Del Rio to
 24 I-35, again, most of the portion of that falls under the
 25 San Antonio District, but -- but we still have a -- a

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1 pretty significant chunk of that. So it's about 40 -- I
 2 believe about 40 miles of that. So again, we're looking
 3 at -- we're going to be working towards building a
 4 four-lane divided highway in that area as well. So --
 5 and -- and this is basically breaking it up into
 6 different projects, you know, for U.S. -- U.S. 90.

7 All right. Well, that -- that was the
 8 last slide. So -- so again, thank you.

9 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.

10 MR. GONZALEZ: You know, we're -- we're
 11 very passionate about safety and advancing
 12 transportation here in -- in our region. So again, I
 13 know we heard from -- from officials on both sides of --
 14 of the border and -- and I think the common theme is,
 15 obviously, how -- the need for transportation and how
 16 important it is. So we understand the message. So
 17 thank you.

18 SECRETARY NELSON: Epi --
 19 Yes. Go ahead.

20 MS. MAYS: So I just want to underscore
 21 what Epi mentioned and from all the comments we had this
 22 morning about, you know, infrastructure and
 23 connectivity, and I can tell you, you're seeing this is
 24 one district. We have three border districts. We have
 25 El Paso District. We have Pharr district. They're all

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1 doing the same thing Epi has showed you. On the highway
 2 side there's a commitment from TxDOT to invest heavily
 3 on improving highway connectivities from our border
 4 crossing/Border Regions to points north but also points
 5 east.

6 You know, we have \$100 billion ten-year
 7 program that we're working on right now and you're going
 8 to see significant increase in investments on -- on --
 9 on highway improvements in our Border Regions because
 10 there's a recognition that this -- we cannot facilitate
 11 this trade without improving highway and corridor
 12 connectivity to our border crossings to our Border
 13 Regions that are generating significant economic impact.
 14 So it is a commitment from the state of Texas but also,
 15 really, from TxDOT to ensure that our highway network
 16 supports that trade. And in the future, we'll continue
 17 to bring you information like this so you can see what
 18 we are doing at TxDOT to assure you that, you know,
 19 Judge Cantu -- I was about to call you mayor because
 20 that's how long I've known you -- really recited the
 21 Border Master Plan, and I was smiling because that was
 22 the intent of the Border Master Plan to really be able
 23 the highlight not just the needs but also the solutions
 24 and the strategies that you-all helped develop.

25 Okay. We facilitated that, you-all

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1 developed the Border Master Plan that he recited here
 2 this morning, and so all of this, what you're really
 3 seeing is really, really critical for you-all to
 4 continue to be relentless about it, identifying the
 5 issues, even if they're dreams.

6 Ports-to-Plains was a dream for years, it
 7 got interstate designated last year, and now we have,
 8 what, you know, Epi showed you program and projects
 9 where we're committed to improving that corridor to
 10 interstate. So, yes, dreams do come true when you stay
 11 on it, you're relentless and you're at the table and
 12 really continuing that dialogue. And for Port-to-Plains
 13 we have the Mexican side. Acuna showed up to meetings
 14 on Port-to-Plains that was, you know, in Texas.

15 So I just wanted to say a few words,
 16 Secretary, that we appreciate the -- the committee, but
 17 our Mexican counterparts being at the table, including,
 18 you know, Canadian counterparts here as well. I was
 19 showing, you know, Consular Harper, the three corridors
 20 we talked about, Ports-to-Plains goes all the way to
 21 Canada, I-35 goes all the way to Canada, 69 goes all the
 22 way to Canada.

23 So those are my comments, and to say thank
 24 you.

25 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.

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1 Mayor Trevino had to leave, but our Mayor
 2 Protem is here and would like to comment.
 3 So, Mayor Protem Perez, we would love to
 4 hear your thoughts.
 5 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: Thank you,
 6 Madam Secretary.
 7 I'd just like to thank you for being here,
 8 again. You know, I know that we're getting close to the
 9 end and we still have a couple more presentations, but I
 10 would like to comment a few things that I've kind of --
 11 you know, just I'm the Mayor Protem, but I'm also the
 12 council member for District 7 which encompasses the
 13 Colombia Bridge and the World Trade Bridge and so
 14 speaking from the perspective of somebody who kind of
 15 lives out there and -- and also representing, we have a
 16 Port of Entry Advisory Committee that we started here at
 17 the -- at the city, and with the county we work very
 18 closely as well and all of the private sector, and
 19 there's a big interest in everything we're talking about
 20 today.
 21 But I would like to ask Epi to go back to
 22 the slide that he had that showed the Laredo Region
 23 there, highlighted all the -- the roads, because just --
 24 I know that a lot of border towns -- you know, we've
 25 talked about having a dream and everything and I think

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1 that's important because everything starts with a
 2 vision, right, and -- and you have to have some kind of,
 3 you know, plan or route or a -- a vision and then try to
 4 figure out how you're going to get there.
 5 I think right there is good.
 6 So I understand that TxDOT is -- is
 7 looking to invest heavily in the -- in the interstates,
 8 but one of the issues that -- that we -- I would like to
 9 take some of the issues Laredo is experiencing and look
 10 closely at what happened here. Because nobody could
 11 anticipate the growth and the boom that we are
 12 experiencing right now, and I'd like for us to be a case
 13 study in what happens when you grow, you know, so
 14 quickly and you don't properly plan for the -- the
 15 infrastructure.
 16 So if you look at the -- the red you have
 17 all of the interstate highways, but I'd like to point
 18 your attention to FM 1472 which is a corridor that
 19 connects the Colombia Bridge to World Trade Bridge.
 20 That road started off as Farm to Market road and it
 21 still is to this day, but that is the -- the route that
 22 connects our two -- No. 1 and No. 2 bridges in the
 23 entire country. The World Trade Bridge No. 1 and
 24 Colombia Bridge No. 2. I think it's also important for
 25 border communities to get some kind of consideration for

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1 not just the highways that we have but also these Farm
 2 to Market roads that are now being, basically, turned
 3 into highways.
 4 They're not equipped to be highways
 5 because they don't meet the same design model, but
 6 they're carrying -- we have more trucks on that little
 7 strip of FM 1472 than we do on I-35 in any given day,
 8 and so it's important for us to also consider these
 9 corridor roads that are not highways yet, look at -- I
 10 know Ms. Mays had had a great idea when I talked to her
 11 in Austin -- no -- San Antonio one day when we had a
 12 conference and we talked about the need to connect, make
 13 sure that the connection between the -- the -- the
 14 commercial bridges is also efficient. You know, trucks
 15 go from Colombia to World Trade all day long. You know,
 16 unless you're part of the FAST program you cannot pass
 17 an empty trailer through World Trade Bridge. So you
 18 have to go to Colombia and then you have to come back.
 19 So it's important to look at these
 20 connective -- this connectivity and the need for these
 21 kind of connections and improvements not just for Laredo
 22 but also for all the border cities that are going to
 23 experience these types of issues if they continue to
 24 grow like how we did. And especially with the region
 25 importance I think that the state needs to reconsider

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1 how they determine funding for border towns because
 2 border towns are usually underserved, we have low census
 3 counts that are not accurately reflective of our
 4 population and so the funding comes in based on
 5 population counts. And so at -- at -- in Laredo what we
 6 have to do is, we're looking at cap \$7 and we have to
 7 decide, are we going to put this money for the needs of
 8 our citizens or are we going to put it for the needs of
 9 the port. Because the money that we just allocated for
 10 Hachar-Reuthinger services the port needs, but it comes
 11 at the expense of the needs for our community.
 12 So I think border towns are at a point
 13 where we want to help with this growth and the -- and
 14 the trade, but we need help. Because we're being asked
 15 to prioritize the needs of the trade at the expense of
 16 our citizens, and then we're ending up with gridlocks
 17 and congestion. I think we need a better balance.
 18 And, of course, there's never going to be
 19 enough money to fund all the dreams that we have and all
 20 the needs, but I think that for this committee's mission
 21 and for everybody in this room, I think that those are
 22 the -- the things that are important to -- to talk about
 23 is that, please, don't use census data, please look at
 24 some other method for figuring out funding of border
 25 infrastructure, and maybe have a special port funding in



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1 addition to the population funding be a multiplier or
 2 something, because I think that is going to be the No. 1
 3 biggest tweak of change that we can get out of this
 4 committee going forward, because it would definitely
 5 change the way that border towns -- I know we don't get
 6 the same consideration that big cities do -- Austin, San
 7 Antonio -- but all of those trucks that are congesting
 8 those cities come here first.
 9 And when we look at crossing times on the
 10 bridges, the bridges might not necessarily be
 11 inefficient but it's these infrastructure needs that are
 12 gridlocking and -- and that's what's really hurting us.
 13 And I think what -- we can work through these issues and
 14 come up with some solutions.
 15 But I did also want to talk about how it's
 16 important for us to kind of get on the same page in
 17 terms of holiday schedules and operations. Because we
 18 could be open on our end, but it -- you know, Mexico is
 19 having a holiday or vice-versa, right. And then at the
 20 same time we have an issue in -- in -- we talked about
 21 having representatives from the Mexican government, I
 22 think it's also important to consider the fact that --
 23 that -- that these companies have to pick three ports
 24 and they can only use those three ports.
 25 So, for example, in Laredo we have the

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1 Colombia Bridge and we have World Trade. Sometime --
 2 and those are two different states in Mexico. Sometimes
 3 the system goes down at World Trade but because all the
 4 paperwork has already been done for that bridge they
 5 have no choice but to wait, instead of being able to say
 6 we'll just go to Colombia. It's not that simple and
 7 maybe it should be. Maybe we should have some kind of
 8 system change -- systemic change on the other side where
 9 these ports are -- are -- you have flexibility.
 10 Like, okay, this bridge is not functioning
 11 efficiently I'm going to weight in two-hour traffic
 12 versus a 30-minute drive will get me across in -- and,
 13 you know, in 30 minutes I can be across, so -- but they
 14 don't have that flexibility and that's a -- that's a --
 15 that's a policy on -- on our -- on our counterpart's
 16 side.
 17 So I think though those three maybe main
 18 topics of discussion would make the biggest impact for
 19 trade going forward not just for Laredo but for all the
 20 cites. And again, I'd like for -- you know, encourage
 21 everybody, look at what we're going through as an
 22 example and -- and -- and prevent that going forward,
 23 but, you know, we have so much potential.
 24 And I just want to thank everybody for
 25 your time and, Madam Secretary, thank you for giving me

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1 the floor to say that.
 2 SECRETARY NELSON: Oh. Great
 3 recommendations.
 4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bravo.
 5 (Applause.)
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes. So good.
 7 MS. MAYS: May I respond?
 8 SECRETARY NELSON: Certainly. Yes.
 9 MS. MAYS: So, Protem Mayor Perez, yes,
 10 you and I spoke a couple months ago in -- in San
 11 Antonio. Definitely your number one -- your issue
 12 raised, the -- the last-mile connectivity, that's
 13 something that we're actually working on. In the next
 14 meeting you will hear us, if you attend that meeting,
 15 we'll be giving this committee an update on what we're
 16 doing to really address the last-mile connectivity
 17 issues in the Border Regions.
 18 That's something that the Border Master
 19 Plan actually recognized, that one of the biggest
 20 challenges in all border communities, whether you're
 21 Eagle Pass, Del Rio or, you know, El Paso, all border
 22 communities have last-mile connectivity congestion
 23 issues. But also, what I want to talk -- you know, one
 24 of the things that we raised in the Border Master Plan,
 25 too, was land use.

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1 In the border communities you have to be
 2 strategic about the land use and my -- my shores example
 3 is you have warehousing and you are now adding
 4 residential. So you -- you're adding mixes that
 5 definitely brings a lot of conflict. So again,
 6 transportation is one element, but also the land-use
 7 issues is the added element how you strategically plan
 8 those and then plan the -- the route in a way that
 9 allows us to come in and make those investments.
 10 But we're working on that and will be able
 11 to report back to the community in the next meeting.
 12 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 13 And the -- the -- the issue of
 14 coordinating holidays is a given. I mean, that -- that
 15 just makes sense to me. Thank you for your
 16 recommendations.
 17 Any other comments on the presentation?
 18 Yes. Go ahead. You've got the -- I'm an old teacher.
 19 Put your hand way up. Okay. Yes. Go ahead.
 20 MR. CALVO: I've got -- I've got really
 21 short arms.
 22 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Go ahead.
 23 Please state your name just so we can record it.
 24 MR. CALVO: Eduardo Calvo, El Paso MPO.
 25 Just a couple of comments.



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1 There is a -- a bill currently being
 2 looked at in the legislature that -- that somehow
 3 address specific -- or dedicated funding for the border;
 4 is that right, Caroline?
 5 MS. MAYS: Yes.
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 7 MAYOR PROTEMPORE PEREZ: What bill is
 8 that; do you know?
 9 MR. CALVO: I don't remember. But it's --
 10 it's right now going through the process.
 11 So if -- if all of us that are interested
 12 that live in the border we en- -- encourage calling
 13 your -- your respective state representatives and
 14 senators and all of that to -- to support that bill
 15 because that -- that's in -- in the making.
 16 The -- the other comment that you made
 17 that really strikes me is, in El Paso we have a -- sort
 18 of like the reverse situation with the -- with the --
 19 the border crossings in that we have five of the six
 20 crossings within the metropolitan area, within the MPO
 21 area are in -- in the state of Texas, but we have one in
 22 New Mexico and Santa Teresa, New Mexico, so -- so that
 23 is -- it's sort of like the reverse, right. So we
 24 have -- sometimes, you know, the -- the -- you know, the
 25 day-to-day operations and sometimes even the politics,

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1 you know, come into play and -- but -- but the point I
 2 want to make is that that keeps us from really looking
 3 at all of the -- the crossings as a system and we really
 4 would like to -- to see them work as a system, right.
 5 Because at some point they compete. You know, I see
 6 that situation in Colombia and Laredo, right.
 7 In -- in our case, you know, there is one
 8 in New Mexico, one of our crossings is in New Mexico,
 9 then three of the crossings are owned by the City of
 10 El Paso, one is owned by the county, and one (the Bridge
 11 of the Americas) by the federal government. So we have
 12 right now a -- I mean, good news and bad news. Good
 13 news, the federal government announced \$600 million for
 14 improvements to the Bridge of the Americas. The bad
 15 news is that they're only looking at the GSA footprint,
 16 right. They're not necessarily looking at the
 17 connectivity. So it's like how can you not do that,
 18 right?
 19 So -- so again, you know, this lack of --
 20 because of different ownership and -- and all of that
 21 prevents us really from looking at these as a -- as a
 22 system and, you know, we would really like to have some
 23 type of oversight, some type of a port authority or
 24 something on both sides that -- that would simplify
 25 that -- that process.

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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Yeah. Yeah. Other
 2 questions? Comments?
 3 MS. MAYS: Madam Secretary, the -- the
 4 bill is HB3805. And then there's another bill that is
 5 4422 about all the stuff related to border and I think
 6 that one will pass as well, so -- most likely. But this
 7 one, yes, this is I think --
 8 SECRETARY NELSON: Who sponsored it?
 9 MS. MAYS: This one is Representative
 10 Canales (HB3805), and then I think 4422 is for TxDOT and
 11 several other entities to study border security,
 12 transportation infrastructure and many other things in
 13 that gobble that's again being proposed. I think the
 14 representative -- Representative Canales probably
 15 proposed that and some of the other representatives
 16 proposed that bill as well. So those are the two bills
 17 we're trying to get.
 18 SECRETARY NELSON: Good. Good. Okay.
 19 Moving on. Moving on. Moving along.
 20 For our last topic we are going to hear
 21 regional infrastructure presentations from the Mexican
 22 border states and federal agencies. The Chair is going
 23 to recognize Secretary Mario Gonzalez from the state of
 24 Nuevo Leon.
 25 SECRETARY GONZALEZ: Good afternoon,

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1 everyone. It's a great pleasure to be here in Laredo,
 2 Texas. I can -- I have always said, Laredo is my second
 3 home. My in-laws live in Laredo. Since I was born
 4 Laredo has been the only -- only border city that I have
 5 visited. I have only been twice to McAllen and I have
 6 been more than 2,000, probably 3,000 times to Laredo. I
 7 have a house here in Laredo so coming to Laredo is
 8 always a pleasure. And also like Al says, Al is in the
 9 diamond business, I am in the food business. Most of
 10 you are customers of ours. Taco Palenque in Texas and
 11 Pollo Loco in Mexico.
 12 Having that in mind, I will -- I will
 13 continue to specify what I need to say, particularly, in
 14 prevention of what's happening in Nuevo Leon. I want to
 15 also thank my paesanos, Roy, Hector and Gregorio who are
 16 here, and all other paesanos from Nuevo Leon to
 17 emphasize that the City of Laredo has the blessing to
 18 have two borders. It's the only border city in the
 19 U.S. that has two borders with two different states.
 20 First with the most important customs
 21 which is Nuevo Laredo and the second one with the most
 22 important state of Mexico which is Nuevo Leon. So
 23 Laredo has everything to offer and Texas is the most
 24 prominent and strategic ally in what I'm going to
 25 present.

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1 Just to have it in context, Colombia has
 2 become a 2 -- No. 2 in income collection. That's how we
 3 measure the importance to the Mexican system. Colombia
 4 is becoming -- has become the No. 2, has surpassed
 5 Ciudad Juarez in this last month before the announcement
 6 of Tesla. So everything that I want to talk is before
 7 Tesla and I'm going to talk about all of that
 8 connectivity that is being done in investment, that we
 9 need to do, that is under construction so we can have
 10 the last-mile connectivity realized. And that's the
 11 most important point of my conversation today. We need
 12 to emphasize also what's happening on the American side.
 13 On the income -- on the income -- on the
 14 income you can see how we have grown in the last two
 15 years. Last year we grew 21 percent in income
 16 collection. This year our estimate and the federal
 17 government is that we will go over 35 percent increase.
 18 So the -- it's a tsunami of investments that are going
 19 into Nuevo Leon and we need to prevent the south
 20 Colombia border and the Laredo cities from a collapse
 21 from not properly planning.
 22 This is according to the -- the state
 23 department U.S. Embassy. U.S. emphasized how Nuevo Leon
 24 and Coahuila are in green concerning security issues and
 25 obviously that gives us an advantage to any other states

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1 that we are in -- in a go-ahead clear way to do business
 2 and there's no security issues especially on the
 3 crossing and getting the merchandise across to Texas.
 4 Up to date. We were 50 percent last year,
 5 now we're -- 72 percent of the nearshoring coming to
 6 Mexico is coming to Nuevo Leon. This -- these numbers
 7 are amazing. Everything that is happening right now
 8 especially Chinese and Asian companies going into Nuevo
 9 Leon is a boom. And with Tesla doing that next it's
 10 going to become -- Nuevo Leon is expecting to grow
 11 6 percent this year and the country is growing only
 12 two -- at 2 percent.
 13 The Highway Master Plan. This is where it
 14 all begins and where it all ends. We need to emphasize
 15 we're doing all of these efforts on connecting all our
 16 commerce and commodities coming from the south ending up
 17 to Colombia. Both of our state highways are now
 18 being -- with the signs making emphasis on the 255 and
 19 35 -- I-35. There is no other Mexican state that is
 20 promoting Texas or American highways. We are. So
 21 that's why we need to pay attention especially to the
 22 255 corridor -- and that's where I want to thank Vanessa
 23 Perez that made emphasis on the highway 1472 and 255
 24 that we need to pay attention to those. Nothing is --
 25 everything that we're doing right now, if we don't

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1 accommodate and facilitate on the American side it's
 2 going to collapse in -- not in a -- not in two years, in
 3 less than nine months.
 4 The investment the Mexican state of Nuevo
 5 Leon is doing is \$24 billion pesos, which is equivalent
 6 to \$1.5 billion, in a period of five years. This a
 7 reality and it's currently happening. So we're
 8 investing over \$1 billion to make our border very
 9 efficient and this will be very unfortunate if we do not
 10 have the connectivity on the American side.
 11 As Vanessa said, the highways once you
 12 cross Colombia is a total mess. Mines Road is a total
 13 pain in the you-know-what crossing between 10:00 to
 14 12:00 or 8:00 to 10:00 or 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Yesterday I
 15 crossed from Monterrey, thank God, at 8:00 p.m. and
 16 there was no traffic. But trust me, if we don't pay
 17 attention to this Laredo is going to be deeply affected
 18 and ultimately what we want is our commerce to be No. 1
 19 and we want Texas to grow, so we want to do -- Laredo
 20 also to be -- grow as we are growing.
 21 What makes us more competitive also is a
 22 unified inspection. Most of you know it. We only have
 23 one inspection instead of two but in the products, in
 24 fresh produce and fruits and vegetables, we are the only
 25 crossing in all the border in which the SENASICA and CBP

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1 and Aduanas are only one inspection so that makes it a
 2 little -- that makes it hospitable to be crossing once
 3 you are in the inspection point compared to any other
 4 border. That's what makes us competitive. And our
 5 crossings are going up. This last month we surpassed
 6 5,000 crossings. When we took office we were around
 7 3,800. And this 5,000 was before Tesla. So everything
 8 is going -- going to grow tremendously, especially when
 9 our counterpart of Coahuila, the Ramos Arizpe corridor,
 10 is going to benefit so much of what's happening to Nuevo
 11 Leon, and that corridor also uses Colombia to get the
 12 products across.
 13 This is repetitive. It's how to assess
 14 the one inspection makes us more competitive, but
 15 this -- this is the one I like the most.
 16 Tesla's story began with a Tesla exclusive
 17 lane. This was implemented in March last year. That's
 18 why that gathers the most attention into Nuevo Leon and
 19 that's where all the story began because of Colombia.
 20 So now in this year we have now seven toll booths, we're
 21 going to expand it to 12, and one of the most important
 22 companies like John Deere and Navistar, Lego, for
 23 example, are going to have their own exclusive lanes.
 24 Trust me. No other border crossing has
 25 the attention that we're giving to the private sector.



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1 That's what makes us more attractive, and what makes us
 2 more attractive also is that we have the opportunity --
 3 Texas, Webb County, especially and the Nuevo Leon
 4 authorities -- to learn about all of the mistakes of
 5 other border cities having housing -- housing land uses
 6 mixtures that do not combine and make a district
 7 strategic planning to have the most efficient border
 8 between the U.S. and Mexico. It is not a dream. It is
 9 a reality and we're going to do it.
 10 Colombia offers a lot of services. I'm
 11 not going to go through it but I see Colombia as an
 12 industrial park, 14-kilometer industrial park with a
 13 crossing. That's what Colombia is. The regional
 14 development projects that we have in the plans is that
 15 there's not going to be in any housing within eight
 16 kilometers from the river inward. No housing at all.
 17 It's going to be only logistics, manufacturing,
 18 maquiladoras. It's going to be pure business.
 19 Right now we're in the process of
 20 establishing a climate monitoring station, which is --
 21 the data is going to through MITRE -- I don't know if
 22 you guys know about MITRE, it's a nonprofit agency in
 23 McLean, Virginia, where we're planning, if everything
 24 goes well, to have an airport in Colombia. But before
 25 we think about that we need the data and we're designing

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1 the runway -- or the Americans are designing the runway
 2 so that airplanes do not fly the American air space. So
 3 that will make it more fast and more feasible to have
 4 this airport in a very short manner.
 5 We are planning to have a Cross
 6 Border Xpress like Tijuana, obviously, in a little --
 7 we're going to start small, but we need to dream and we
 8 need to have plans that are real -- really feasible.
 9 Our state is recognized, as you know, as we're the
 10 most -- we're -- we're recognized everywhere that we're
 11 always working -- working the Texas Loop and we never
 12 stop. So that's why we have most of the main customers.
 13 H-E-B is one of our main customers, Lego, Navistar,
 14 Tesla, obviously, other companies, very important
 15 companies, but this is the most im- -- most important
 16 information I'm about to share with you.
 17 When we took office I was waiting for a
 18 study to see what happened to the crossings, once they
 19 cross Colombia where would they go. Well, I'm going --
 20 I'm going to -- this next slide, before this, this is
 21 the -- how the increments have grown between passenger
 22 vehicles and trucks comparing one year to another.
 23 The amazing data is that 14 percent has
 24 grown in private passenger vehicles -- and we don't have
 25 the study on Colombia yet. So they're passing other

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1 states and they're using Colombia. So 14 percent is a
 2 very significant amount for us, but we never suspected
 3 that Colombia could become also a passenger cross of
 4 entry to the U.S. We were more concentrated on cargo.
 5 And in trucks we have grown 8 percent less in than one
 6 year.
 7 Here this is the one I was waiting for. I
 8 was also -- when we took office I was always wondering
 9 if there was a study done by the authorities, Mexican or
 10 American, what would -- what happens everything that is
 11 crossing back where does it go. Does it go to the 255?
 12 Does got to Mines Road? Does it go to Eagle Pass?
 13 There was no data available.
 14 So what we have to do was -- I asked CBP
 15 for permission Mexican style. We -- we let -- we asked
 16 permission to put four Mexican employees of ours on the
 17 intersection on the 255 when you cross over and you pass
 18 TxDOT. There's four for one reason: One would
 19 concentrate for the ones that would go to Mines Road;
 20 one would concentrate to the ones that go to 255; and
 21 the ones -- the other one will concentrate to the ones
 22 that go to Eagle Pass. And there was one extra one in
 23 case each one fainted because of the heat or the --
 24 the -- so we had four -- four personnel for one month,
 25 and the figures here are very, very interesting because

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1 we finally can have -- sorry, because I'm losing my
 2 sight, I cannot see. I turned 50 and you usually begin
 3 to lose things.
 4 We have -- see this in this side, you can
 5 see by weeks, it's -- on empties on the 255 in -- during
 6 a month 20 percent was empties, cargo was 48 percent and
 7 passenger was 28 percent of the total crossings that
 8 were happening. Here is by weeks; the color represents
 9 different weeks. The first week of March, second, third
 10 accordingly. On the second -- on the -- on the Mines
 11 Road what we found is that 30 percent goes to Mines are
 12 empty, 40 percent cargo and 30 percent is passengers.
 13 In -- and overall we see that empties -- no -- it's
 14 here -- Eagle Pass -- 23 percent go to Eagle Pass, cargo
 15 50 percent, passenger 27 percent. But the amazing thing
 16 is that Mines Road is going to become more congested and
 17 we don't see another option. Colombia's are crossing
 18 and are going also to Mines Road. So we need to pay
 19 attention to what's happening right now. And one
 20 solution, which I'm glad that -- that TxDOT is doing a
 21 lot of things -- is to 45 to 255.
 22 Epi told me right now, and Caroline, about
 23 the state legislature is going right now currently. But
 24 I hope it doesn't take that long because everything we
 25 need to have it done in Nuevo Leon by December this

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1 year. La Gloria Colombia is going to be open in
 2 December 27 this year. So once La Gloria is open we're
 3 going to crash when -- when we cross over because we
 4 don't have infrastructure appropriate for everything
 5 that's going to come over. On this side we can see the
 6 type of vehicles overall: Passenger 29, cargo 44,
 7 27 percent was empties. The grand totals: 58 percent
 8 of all types of vehicles are going to Mines Road;
 9 36 percent to highway 255; and 6 percent to Eagle Pass.
 10 So there's the red alert. Mines Road is
 11 still going to be very congested. We need to find a
 12 different option and we already have it in front of us;
 13 it's the 255. If you haven't traveled the 255 it's a
 14 very good highway, but it has its -- it -- it has
 15 these -- sometimes it's two lanes, then becomes one,
 16 then becomes two, and it's not going to be enough for
 17 what we are planning to have crossing over into that --
 18 Texas.
 19 Here is the -- basically, what we need to
 20 pay attention at 255 -- and earlier Vanessa talked about
 21 the 1472, right -- we need to pay attention, and we --
 22 also before we finish I just wanted to say,
 23 Madam Secretary, we're so happy to be working with
 24 Texas. Texas is our strategic ally. We're emphasize --
 25 emphasizing and paying all of the attention needed to

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1 comply on what Texas tells us to do. That's why we need
 2 to work together as we are -- 255 is not a vein, it's an
 3 artery and it needs to be paid attention to so the heart
 4 can beat as we the commerce beats.
 5 And I want to thank also Caroline Mays
 6 that also has been an amazing ally to us. And I think
 7 all of us that are here in this table what we want, at
 8 the end of the day, is to be better to have our commerce
 9 and goods faster and safest and to become (Laredo
 10 Region) the most competitive ever. It is right now, but
 11 that's not (Spanish spoken) let's make it -- always have
 12 it the most secure, the most safest and particularly the
 13 fastest one. That's going make to the difference of
 14 all.
 15 We are part -- and I have to say it many
 16 times, we are part of the Laredo port. Because when --
 17 always they talk about the Laredo land port how it's the
 18 No. 1 port of all the world, we are included, we are in
 19 the part of the port. So sometimes they try to separate
 20 us.
 21 And another point, we're never competing
 22 with Nuevo Laredo. We're a complement to Nuevo Laredo.
 23 We have a different market. Our market we're aiming is
 24 everyone that has to go up north that doesn't have to
 25 stop in Laredo. So we're -- that's why we're -- where

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1 our aim is, is, to have all the trucks that do not need
 2 to stop in Laredo for nothing, go Colombia.
 3 Like on the empties. When they -- the
 4 decision was done by CBP there was a lot of controversy
 5 saying that why the CBP decided to send all the empties
 6 to Colombia because that would cause Tamaulipas to lose
 7 an amount of tolls. That's what happened. Nuevo Laredo
 8 won tremendously. But the toll booth amount is
 9 insignificant to all of the empty spaces that were left
 10 for more cargo to come to Nuevo Laredo.
 11 So that's why we're a complement and
 12 that's why we need to work together. We need to get rid
 13 of that saying that we're competitors. We're not
 14 competitors. We're allies and we're complements to each
 15 other. I want to thank Tamaulipas for being here for
 16 Coahuila (Spanish spoken) and God bless you. Everything
 17 for 255. Thank you.
 18 (Applause.)
 19 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you,
 20 Secretary Gonzalez. You always give a marvelous
 21 presentation.
 22 Aww, thank you. Free public advertising.
 23 Thank you.
 24 SECRETARY GONZALEZ: Thank you.
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: You know, we could

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1 bling this out, too. Thank you. I bling everything
 2 out.
 3 Now, the Chair would like to recognize
 4 Secretary Maria Granados from the state of Chihuahua.
 5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She's not here.
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: She's not here. Okay.
 7 Well, I'm sorry.
 8 Well, the Chair is going to recognize
 9 Secretary Claudio Bres from the state of Coahuila.
 10 MR. LIBSON: Yes. Good -- good morning.
 11 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. I'm sorry.
 12 MS. MAYS: Morris is here representing
 13 Coahuila.
 14 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 15 MR. LIBSON: I am Morris Libson
 16 representing Secretary Claudio Bres from the state --
 17 SECRETARY NELSON: From Chihuahua.
 18 MR. LIBSON: -- from the state of
 19 Coahuila.
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay.
 21 MR. LIBSON: And I'm not going to have a
 22 problem with the remote because I don't have a video
 23 presentation.
 24 SECRETARY NELSON: I like this.
 25 MR. LIBSON: Secretary Bres asked me to



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1 represent him a few days ago and kindly neglected to
 2 tell me that there was presentation to be made. So I
 3 worked late last night and -- but I do want to -- first
 4 of all, I want to -- to thank you for the invitation
 5 Madam Chairman and -- and this committee and Claudio
 6 Bres asked me to extend his regards to all of you and
 7 that of our Governor Miguel Angel Riquelme. I also want
 8 to thank the state of Texas and -- and TxDOT, Caroline
 9 Mays and -- and all of her -- of her TxDOT staff, for
 10 working hard for the corridors and the highways that
 11 connect our two Coahuila ports, which is Acuna/Del Rio
 12 and Piedras Negras/Eagle Pass. I want to make reference
 13 to and we want to thank Caroline and TxDOT for the
 14 recently completed U.S. 57 corridor interstate
 15 feasibility study, which I think is very important.
 16 It's a study whose findings mark the first step to the
 17 creation of IH-57 and, of course, dream -- those are
 18 dreams that I hope to see in my lifetime and, of course,
 19 IH-57 along with Highway 90 while we plan to complement
 20 IH-35 and the upcoming IH-27 Ports-to-Plains that goes
 21 through Del Rio and Eagle Pass to enhance our border
 22 trade.
 23 Now -- we talk about infrastructure, but
 24 now we have nearshoring and all kinds of shorings that
 25 are coming and what I can tell you in Coahuila is that

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1 in the first 20 weeks of 2023 we have had 24 prospect
 2 companies, mainly automotive, visit us in all ports of
 3 the state. So that is, I think, very noteworthy; it is
 4 actually astonishing. I want to mention some of the
 5 highlights of the study and the visit that Caroline Mays
 6 and Claudia Lagos and their staff made to the state of
 7 Coahuila. The -- both the -- the Torreon
 8 Ports-to-Plains corridor and the 57 corridor both
 9 come -- one coming from Del Rio and the other one coming
 10 from the Saltillo to both of our border ports in -- in
 11 Coahuila.
 12 The Texas/Mexico border is, of course,
 13 critical for the prosperity and the economic
 14 competitiveness of both of our countries, and I might
 15 say that or ports in Coahuila we certainly do not intend
 16 to -- to compete with Laredo and Nuevo Laredo. That's
 17 like taking -- in Spanish you say (Spanish spoken) that
 18 means like taking a hair from a cat. But -- but I can
 19 tell you this: That we are the ports to capture all the
 20 overflow and the growth that Laredo and Nuevo Laredo
 21 and -- and Colombia cannot handle.
 22 So I can also tell you that the -- on the
 23 Highway 57 corridor and at Coahuila's two ports in
 24 Piedras Negras and Eagle Pass we have -- like
 25 Mayor Salinas and -- and Judge Cantu have mentioned, we

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1 have the improvements to Bridge 2 plus a private
 2 crossing that -- that was revealed today by -- by
 3 Judge Cantu, and in Ciudad Acuna and Del Rio I know --
 4 like you mentioned, Mayor Arreola, and my good friend,
 5 Jorge Ramon, are working on their second international
 6 bridge.
 7 I can tell you, at the state of Coahuila
 8 is planning an over \$270 million pledge investment for
 9 what is the -- the bridge -- the bridge two improvements
 10 plus the plans to build six state loops around federal
 11 Highway 57 and Highway 30 from Torreon to the border.
 12 Plus the expansion, like has been mentioned, to Bridge 2
 13 in Piedras Negras. And, of course, that \$75 million has
 14 been invested on the Mexican side of Bridge 2, plus an
 15 additional substantial investment that is being made on
 16 the Eagle Pass side as Mayor Salinas let you know.
 17 I do want to -- to mention that we need to
 18 get ahead of the game. I know that we've said that
 19 repeatedly. Our infrastructure lags behind on the
 20 growth that is coming, but I do want to give you very
 21 quickly where -- what we're looking at that was
 22 determined by the U.S. 57 corridor study.
 23 We're looking at a growth of four times in
 24 the freight tonnage along Highway 57 from -- from now to
 25 2045. We're looking at the -- the gross domestic

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1 product increasing over 100 percent from now till 2050
 2 along the -- the Highway 57, the Coahuila ports, and the
 3 Texas counties (the 17 counties) that are along
 4 Highway 57 in and around the area. We're also looking
 5 at a -- a 36 percent increase in employment growth in
 6 the study area. And we're also looking for a 30 percent
 7 increase in population in that study area on our
 8 Coahuila border with the Texas counties in Texas. The
 9 average daily traffic of commercial vehicles is going to
 10 increase over two and a half times in the next few years
 11 along the corridor, and the average daily traffic of all
 12 vehicles is almost nearly going to double here very,
 13 very quickly.
 14 In closing, we in the -- in the state of
 15 Coahuila want to assure you that -- want to assure our
 16 Texas partners, Texas now being the eighth economy in
 17 the world, that we are willing and we're able to be a
 18 willing and worthy border trade partners with the state
 19 of Texas.
 20 And again, Madam Secretary, we -- we thank
 21 you for the invitation. Please take back our regards
 22 to -- to the governor, and again, our -- our thanks to
 23 Caroline Mays and -- and to all of the people at TxDOT.
 24 Thank you very much.
 25 (Applause.)



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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Thank you.
 2 Any questions or comments?
 3 And, finally, the Chair recognizes
 4 Secretary Ninfa Cantu on the behalf of the state of
 5 Tamaulipas. Secretary Cantu?
 6 SECRETARY CANTU: Well, thank you,
 7 Madam Secretary. Tamaulipas is coming with a new
 8 government.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 10 SECRETARY CANTU: Yes. And good afternoon
 11 again to all. And I'm sorry my English is not so good,
 12 but I -- I want to try.
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: It's beautiful.
 14 SECRETARY CANTU: Thank you. I would like
 15 to make a brief presentation of Tamaulipas' economic
 16 overview and the new projects we have.
 17 Okay. Our states have seven productive
 18 regions in which are strategic sectors such as
 19 automobile, electrical/electronic,
 20 chemical/petrochemical, aerospace, medical, energy,
 21 agriculture and tourism are present. 1,380 world class
 22 companies participate in these industrial sectors which
 23 generate 238,000 jobs.
 24 As you can see in Tamaulipas there are
 25 global industries that are growing steadily and

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1 investing -- investing. Sorry. With the leadership of
 2 Governor Americo Villarreal Tamaulipas recovered the
 3 priority task of promoting Mexico around the world and
 4 the competitive advantages offered by the regions of our
 5 state. As a result of this effort in 2022 Tamaulipas
 6 received \$982 million of investment mainly from the
 7 United States, United Kingdom, Holland, Spain and South
 8 Korea.
 9 In total between October 2022 and
 10 March 2023, 29 companies have confirmed invest- --
 11 investment in Tamaulipas with an amount of \$303 million
 12 that represents the creation of 5,935 jobs. This trust
 13 in Tamaulipas is growing day by day. Currently there
 14 are 44 projects in promotion that represent an
 15 investment of \$2,345,000 and a potential generation of
 16 15,000 jobs.
 17 As you know Tamaulipas in a -- is an
 18 exporting state for excellence. We are the first base
 19 national in Mexico in trade flow with the United States
 20 of America and we lead development of goods in the
 21 chemical industry and in participation in the machinery
 22 and equipment electric -- electrical, and, of course,
 23 computer equipment sectors.
 24 42 percent offering trade with U.S. is
 25 processed through Nuevo Laredo entering those customs by

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1 road and 58 percent by rail which tell about the
 2 leadership of our infrastructure and our role in this
 3 new era of trade between the two states.
 4 One of -- one of the most important
 5 strengths of our economy is the transportation
 6 connectivity we have. Our state has 8,745 miles of
 7 highways and roads that efficiently connect with four of
 8 the country's most important highways.
 9 Tamaulipas is the most connected border in
 10 Mexico. Eighteen international crossings, position us
 11 at the perfect link for national production with the
 12 markets locator in the United States. In Tamaulipas
 13 there are 582 miles of railway lines connecting the main
 14 markets of Mexico and the entire U.S.
 15 And now -- okay. Among the strategies of
 16 the government of Tamaulipas for competitiveness and
 17 foreign trade I would like to highlight the efforts of
 18 the three levels of government to promote strategies to
 19 increase competitiveness in the export sector.
 20 The large investments that are now being
 21 developed are the result of the coordinated work that
 22 confirm our conviction to make our border the region
 23 with the most competitive economic future in North
 24 America.
 25 In Nuevo Laredo the installation of the

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1 National Customs Agency. With this project we are
 2 focusing all of the federal custom eyes to Nuevo Laredo,
 3 the greatest port in America.
 4 The expansion of the Bridge 3 gives a bulk
 5 of the operations through this world trade port. It
 6 will increase its infrastructure from 8 to 18 lanes. On
 7 the second place, the construction of the International
 8 Bridge 4/5 which will improve the circulation condition
 9 of cross border transit and reduce these operating
 10 costs.
 11 In the last month we witnessed the ground
 12 breaking ceremonies of two big projects: The
 13 construction of the second Kansas City Southern Rail
 14 Bridge which will double the capacity of the railway
 15 operation with a second bridge.
 16 Next to the expansion of the Reynosa
 17 Anzalduas International Bridges. It will now allow the
 18 commercial operation in this port with six new lanes and
 19 the unified cargo process facility to entice the
 20 operation through this port.
 21 And the last but not least, the Reynosa
 22 Pharr International Bridge with the construction of the
 23 twin bridge which will double the capacity going from
 24 four to an eight-lane bridge.
 25 I would like to conclude by reminding the

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1 commitment of Mexico's three levels of government to
 2 consolidate the strength of our infrastructure and
 3 logistic platform. And as we say in Tamaulipas, let's
 4 bridge the gap and build the future together.
 5 (Applause.)
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 7 SECRETARY CANTU: Oh, you're very welcome.
 8 We have a little presentation video. Can I --
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 10 SECRETARY CANTU: Yes?
 11 SECRETARY NELSON: Absolutely.
 12 SECRETARY CANTU: Okay. Thank you, Madam.
 13 (WHEREUPON, video played.
 14 Applause.)
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: Beautiful.
 16 SECRETARY CANTU: And I have this for you.
 17 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Okay.
 18 We're all going to have a party. Thank you very much.
 19 SECRETARY CANTU: Thank you.
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: Well, thank you all.
 21 Truly excellent, excellent presentations today. What
 22 a -- what -- and I would just open it up for discussion
 23 and any -- I'm sorry. I will back up. Thank you. I
 24 have a new assistant here.
 25 Just excellent presentations. I would

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1 open it up for any discussions, any outstanding issues
 2 or comments or questions.
 3 Marco?
 4 MS. MAYS: Gerry.
 5 SECRETARY NELSON: Gerry, our host.
 6 MR. SCHWEBEL: Thank you. Thank you very
 7 much.
 8 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 9 MR. SCHWEBEL: Thank you, Madam Secretary,
 10 this is Gerry Schwebel again.
 11 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 12 MR. SCHWEBEL: And as -- as a -- the
 13 Laredo representative of the Border Trade Advisory
 14 Committee I also want to thank everyone. I want to
 15 thank you.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 17 MR. SCHWEBEL: I want to thank Caroline
 18 and TxDOT, and all of our friends from the BTAC that
 19 came from all over the border to be here today and --
 20 and actually all our guests. This is probably one of
 21 the largest meetings we've had, Caroline, right?
 22 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 23 MS. MAYS: Yes.
 24 MR. SCHWEBEL: So I -- one thing is for
 25 sure Secretary of State Jane Nelson does draw a crowd.

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1 (Applause.)
 2 MR. SCHWEBEL: And I -- and I -- and I
 3 want -- I want to share -- I want to make -- share some
 4 good news and I also will close with some
 5 recommendations for our next upcoming meeting, if we
 6 could.
 7 First of all, thank you, Marco, for
 8 bringing up House Bill 3805. I've just been advised by
 9 our public affairs team right now that House Bill 3805
 10 was approved by committee this morning.
 11 (Applause.)
 12 MR. SCHWEBEL: Thank you. And now, we've
 13 got it -- you know, we got it out of committee in the
 14 House, it -- it's basically going -- it's a new category
 15 of funding for the border. So let's not every -- all
 16 mayors rush to the poles right now, but it is great news
 17 and now it goes to the Senate. We will need help with
 18 Senator Nichols --
 19 SECRETARY NELSON: Is he carrying?
 20 MR. SCHWEBEL: -- who is carrying on the
 21 Senate side.
 22 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay.
 23 MR. SCHWEBEL: So maybe a phone call,
 24 Madam Secretary, to Senator Nichols that we're -- we've
 25 been talking about all of this all morning. I think the

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1 timing -- maybe -- maybe Chairman Canales heard that you
 2 were going to be in Laredo today and I better hold it
 3 swiftly through the committee, but -- and also for all
 4 the members of the BTAC, because this impacts the whole
 5 border, impacts everybody in the state, if you-all
 6 share -- care to make some calls as well from your
 7 mayors and your -- your county judges, and I hope it
 8 moves swiftly on the senate side. That would be -- that
 9 would be appreciated.
 10 The recommendations that I'd like to make
 11 as a member -- and those of us that live and work on the
 12 border, we like to say that our economies on both sides
 13 of the border are integrated so we -- we like to say
 14 that we are one city in two countries or one city in
 15 three states or two states whichever way we look at it.
 16 And I think you've seen today, Madam Secretary, how we
 17 work together as a public-private partnerships, you
 18 know, both communities as one community, you know, for
 19 the benefit of the whole North American region.
 20 We do have some challenges that we've
 21 discussed this morning. I think for next meeting 9
 22 October some of the members have made lots of
 23 recommendations for our next meeting to -- to consider
 24 looking at topics of discussion of the example that we
 25 face in El Paso, the closure of the port of entry was



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1 critical. With all that's been discussed I know that,
 2 you know, for our private sector colleagues is that, you
 3 know, government, you know, needs to work with the
 4 private sector if border trade is going to flow. We
 5 can't say this will be the port of entry where
 6 everything will pause here or that will be the entry.
 7 There's -- we have 28-29 ports of entry and we want to
 8 grow more with more activity so we need to make sure
 9 that no one port director can decide where trade's going
 10 to flow. It's got to have input from the stakeholders
 11 at the local and at the state and at the federal level.
 12 I think that would be something we could perhaps put on
 13 the agenda.
 14 The second point is that we also have, as
 15 you heard, some pending infrastructure projects through
 16 the BTMP, which is the -- the model that we work with,
 17 all of the projects, the 600-plus projects, that those
 18 priorities be adhered to. As to the projects that are
 19 pending, there are applications right now for new ports
 20 of entry, expansions of our ports of entry that are at
 21 the federal level, you know, and we -- we share that
 22 with the Secretary. That's at the federal level. But
 23 we at the state need to send a message on how critical
 24 those projects are for the North American Region so
 25 perhaps we could have discussion about a coalition among

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1 all of us to make sure that the White House gets the
 2 right message.
 3 Secretary Cantu brought up the news of the
 4 new headquarters of Mexico Aduanas moving to Nuevo
 5 Laredo, that will be a transition period of the former
 6 SACK (phonetic) who handled Aduanas now becomes under
 7 the -- under -- under the new model of -- of -- of --
 8 of -- of Aduanas. Perhaps we could get a briefing at
 9 the next -- at the next meeting as to how that
 10 transition will impact the role of the movement or
 11 supply chains. And I hope it does not become a
 12 disruptor, but it becomes and enhance -- and enhancement
 13 of that.
 14 So I -- I -- those are three topics that
 15 I've shared with them and some of our other colleagues,
 16 and I hope that TxDOT and Caroline, and you,
 17 Madam Secretary, consider that for the -- for the next
 18 meeting agenda.
 19 SECRETARY NELSON: Very good. Yes.
 20 MAYOR SALINAS: Gerry, Madam Chairman,
 21 just to rock the boat a little bit, we're making history
 22 down on the Coahuila border and Eagle Pass and Del Rio,
 23 consider having one of these meetings in Eagle Pass.
 24 MR. SCHWEBEL: Absolutely.
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: That's not rocking the

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1 boat.
 2 MAYOR SALINAS: You're always welcome.
 3 Well, from El Paso it's no problem they pass right
 4 through there, but everybody else has to --
 5 SECRETARY NELSON: That's not rocking the
 6 boat.
 7 MAYOR SALINAS: Well, that means -- that
 8 means -- that means you're going to consider it?
 9 MR. SCHWEBEL: Actually, can we have
 10 nachos? Nachos in Eagle Pass?
 11 MAYOR SALINAS: You can have nachos. They
 12 were -- they were -- they were born in Piedras Negras.
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: I love it. I love it.
 14 MAYOR ARREOLA: Madam Secretary wants to
 15 go and have some wine, so she's going to go to Del Rio.
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: I have such a
 17 reputation. This is why everybody comes to my meetings.
 18 SECRETARY CANTU: Well, maybe she likes
 19 mescal. Yes. I think she is going to Victoria.
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: Does anyone else have
 21 any constructive comments? Marco? Marco? Secretary?
 22 MR. GONZALEZ: Madam Secretary, I want to
 23 thank you for this -- invitation for this meeting.
 24 Governor Garcia wants to invite you in three-months time
 25 to the iteration -- the iteration -- the opening of the

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1 check point --
 2 SECRETARY NELSON: Inauguration, yes.
 3 MR. GONZALEZ: -- in Colombia.
 4 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 5 MR. GONZALEZ: It's our most secure border
 6 port of entry. It's similar to the I-35.
 7 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 8 MR. GONZALEZ: All the seven lanes are
 9 going to have to cross through that -- cross the check
 10 point one kilometer before our bridge. Our Mexican
 11 authorities are going to be state -- the Mexicans
 12 authorities going to be also checking if all of the
 13 people crossing have their visas and documents so we
 14 don't have any migration issues.
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 16 MR. GONZALEZ: We're also creating our
 17 state border patrol which are -- is going to be trained
 18 by the border patrol of the U.S. government. So you can
 19 be there and we can have the meeting, our Border Trade
 20 Advisory Committee meeting in Colombia and -- and take
 21 advantage of that big event and significant event for
 22 Nuevo Leon and nearshoring of having that border secure.
 23 On the comment of Gerry about Aduanas in
 24 Nuevo Laredo we are so happy that it's coming to Nuevo
 25 Laredo. I was two days ago with Rafael --



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1 SECRETARY NELSON: Uh-huh.
 2 MR. GONZALEZ: -- Medellin in Mexico
 3 City --
 4 SECRETARY NELSON: Uh-huh.
 5 MR. GONZALEZ: -- and supposedly they're
 6 going to be by -- during 2024 everything's going to be
 7 moving here to Nuevo Laredo and we're so happy that
 8 we're going to have Aduanas so close that are going to
 9 facilitate everything, and Rafael Medellin is an
 10 excellent public servant with a pragmatic vision for
 11 very efficient. So we -- we're working very hard with
 12 the federal government. Thank you.
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you. Any other
 14 comments? Well, again -- oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
 15 I'm sorry. Yes. Canadian neighbor is always, always
 16 such a wonderful part of this. Susan Harper.
 17 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: Well, thank you
 18 very much. I again wanted to just start by saying that
 19 the -- I found this a fascinating meeting and certainly
 20 the kind of information that I --
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 22 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- find valuable
 23 and --
 24 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 25 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- and I

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1 hope you won't mind I'll be sharing it with my
 2 colleague, the consular general candidate in
 3 Monterrey --
 4 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 5 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- because I
 6 know she is also very interested in how we work
 7 together.
 8 (Spanish spoken.) It -- it really means a
 9 lot that you see it as well in these terms of this
 10 complete corridor.
 11 I'm hoping that we could get those
 12 wonderful presentations that were shown today.
 13 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 14 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: I thought so
 15 many of them had excellent data and --
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Yes.
 17 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- key points
 18 and I -- and I -- I -- I certainly tried to take notes,
 19 but there were some --
 20 SECRETARY NELSON: And others have
 21 requested it, too.
 22 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- where just
 23 the -- just the picture was worth a thousand words, as
 24 they say.
 25 SECRETARY NELSON: Yeah.

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1 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: And again, I'd
 2 just like to mention that, to me, the -- the point of
 3 being included in this committee is at an appropriate
 4 point --
 5 SECRETARY NELSON: Uh-huh.
 6 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- on the
 7 appropriate subjects, if Canada could offer some kind of
 8 additional information that could be useful to the
 9 committee we are very interested in doing so.
 10 I have spoken to my colleagues in our
 11 customs group, as well as the customs border -- border
 12 people who -- on the private sector who might be able to
 13 help us, and I -- I'd like to recognize that Robert
 14 Morris from the Customs Broker Association
 15 was talking --
 16 SECRETARY NELSON: Oh, yes.
 17 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- last night
 18 about where we might be able to provide some
 19 information, but I think it's most important that this
 20 be relevant to the mandate of this committee --
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: Uh-huh.
 22 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: -- and to the
 23 other members. So if there's anyone who particularly
 24 has some suggestions -- I know that Jake mentioned some
 25 ideas, but if there is anyone who would like to help us

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1 narrow down how we could make a contribution to this
 2 committee I'd be glad to receive that information, just
 3 let me know.
 4 SECRETARY NELSON: Wonderful.
 5 GENERAL CONSULAR HARPER: Thank you so
 6 much.
 7 SECRETARY NELSON: Wonderful. Thank you.
 8 And you've been so quiet. Let me see if
 9 anybody else. Okay. Yes. Texas Department of
 10 Transportation has always been an associate regarding
 11 the success of this organization, so I'll let Caroline
 12 have the last --
 13 MS. MAYS: Yeah. No. I just wanted to,
 14 one, thank you, Secretary, for a very successful
 15 meeting, and all of our, you know, honorable guests from
 16 Canada. And I've said it, too, actually, you're my
 17 consular because I'm Canadian and I'm American, so --
 18 she didn't know that. Jake knew. You know, but also
 19 I've been embraced by Mexico so I serve all three
 20 countries. But -- you know, and again, I want to thank
 21 BTAC members for your relentless showing up to these
 22 meetings.
 23 I know it's not easy to get to every
 24 Border Region, but showing up here means a lot to -- to
 25 us because what you do is really what keeps us going, it

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1 supports our districts to get funding, you make a
 2 business case for what we do, okay? Your voice matters
 3 more than us at staff level, I can tell you that. A
 4 mayor who goes to speak to our commissioner is more
 5 important than Caroline saying anything to our
 6 commissioner, I just want to let you know that. So
 7 we -- we really, really appreciate that, continue doing
 8 that, continue being at the table. And to our Mexican
 9 counterparts and friends and Canadian, please continue,
 10 the collaboration is so important, okay.
 11 I was in Chihuahua last week. We'll
 12 continue. We're planning to make a trip to Mexico City
 13 and we're planning to make our rounds. Marco, we're
 14 going to come back and visit with Tesla and everybody
 15 else in Monterrey soon, and then definitely Torreon, and
 16 we're going to come to Ciudad Victoria, okay --
 17 SECRETARY CANTU: Yes.
 18 MS. MAYS: -- and -- and really visit and
 19 understand. Because we need to understand what's going
 20 on, on the Mexican side so we can address border issues
 21 and challenges, but also roadway infrastructure on the
 22 U.S. and the Mexican side, and continue that, you know,
 23 kind of two-way relationship.
 24 So I just want to thank everybody, but I
 25 wanted to announce to secretary that the Texas

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1 Department of -- not the governor appointed a Texas
 2 Transportation Commissioner from the border, from the
 3 lower Rio Grande Valley region.
 4 (Applause.)
 5 MS. MAYS: Some of you know him very well,
 6 you know Alejandro Meade. We had his hearing, I think,
 7 last week. We had the pleasure of training him a couple
 8 of weeks ago on everything TxDOT. So hopefully in
 9 future meetings he will be present, and he's, you know,
 10 really excited and would like to definitely be a part of
 11 this and support you-all in your work.
 12 You guys have seen Commissioner New, he
 13 continues to be very supportive of this group, so you're
 14 probably -- you're going to get two commissioners that
 15 we had in the past. You know, Laura Ryan from Houston
 16 re- -- retired, but now you're getting an even -- you
 17 know, a much more border centric commissioner.
 18 So please visit with him, provide him
 19 information and -- you know, and help him, you know, get
 20 up to speed on all things border issues if you're from
 21 Laredo Region, if you're from El Paso, he's from RGV,
 22 probably knows a lot about RGV. But educate him about
 23 your region, specifically of what your issues are so he
 24 can be equipped when he sits on the dais or when he
 25 talks about things that are representative on the

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1 commission level to be really able to, you know, be a
 2 voice for you-all at -- you know, throughout the Border
 3 Regions. I just wanted to make that announcement and
 4 the good news to share with you-all.
 5 So thank you, Secretary.
 6 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you.
 7 And you have no idea funding wise how
 8 important that is to have a commissioner who understands
 9 the -- the -- the -- exactly the kind of information
 10 that you presented here this morning and make sure they
 11 understand the needs of this region.
 12 So again, thank you all so much for coming
 13 today. Thank you again to Laredo for rolling out this
 14 red carpet. And, specifically, to IBC, oh, my gosh,
 15 you've been so gracious.
 16 MR. SCHWEBEL: By the way, we have -- we
 17 have lunch. We have lunch. We have -- if you -- if you
 18 want to have lunch you can stay here. Some of you that
 19 want to leave you can take it with you. You don't have
 20 to stay. We'll take our lunch with us.
 21 SECRETARY NELSON: You've been so kind.
 22 Well, tentatively the next BTAC meeting
 23 will take place on August 22nd and because we've now had
 24 our meetings in El Paso and Laredo, the Chair would like
 25 to recommend this committee hold its next meeting in the

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1 Rio Grande Valley.
 2 (Applause.)
 3 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Okay. So thank
 4 you again. I'd like to give a big thanks to Texas
 5 Department of Transportation for all of your hard work.
 6 With that, the time is 12:35. Do I have a
 7 motion to adjourn?
 8 MR. CALVO: So moved.
 9 SECRETARY NELSON: Okay. Do I have a
 10 second?
 11 MR. CANALES: Second.
 12 SECRETARY NELSON: We do. We have a lot
 13 of seconds. All those in favor say "aye".
 14 (Aye.)
 15 SECRETARY NELSON: Opposed?
 16 And then hearing none the committee is
 17 adjourned until our next meeting in August.
 18 (Applause.)
 19 SECRETARY NELSON: Thank you all. Thank
 20 you. Thank you. Thank you.
 21 (Meeting adjourned.)
 22 * * * * *
 23
 24
 25



1 THE STATE OF TEXAS)
 2 COUNTY OF BEXAR)
 3 I, DICIE LEE EYTCHESON, a Certified Shorthand
 4 Reporter in and for the State of Texas, do hereby
 5 certify that the facts stated by me in the foregoing
 6 caption hereto are true, and later transcribed from
 7 stenograph into typewriting.

8 I further certify that the above and foregoing
 9 transcript as set forth in typewriting, is a full,
 10 true, and a correct transcription of the statements
 11 made at the time of the taking of said meeting.

12 WITNESS MY HAND, this the 11th day of May, 2023.

13
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