



MEXICO BUSINESS CENTER
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce

February 25, 2008

Hon. Eduardo Sojo Garza Aldape
Secretario
Secretaría de Economía
Alfonso Reyes No. 30
Col. Hipódromo Condesa
Delegación Cuauhtémoc,
México, D.F. C.P. 06140

Hon. Carlos M. Gutierrez
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Hon. Juan Camilo Mouriño Terrazo
Secretario
Secretaría de Gobernación
Abraham González No. 48
Col. Juárez, Del Cuauhtémoc
Mexico, D. F. 06600

Hon. Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Re: Reducing Wait Times at the California – Baja California Border

Dear Secretary Sojo, Secretary Gutierrez, Secretary Mouriño and Secretary Chertoff:

California and Baja California share a 200-mile common border, which serves as California’s door to Mexico, the state’s largest trading partner. However, the infrastructure at our common border is inadequate and cannot keep pace with current and future demands to support the cross-border flow of people and goods. Border congestion and wait times ranging anywhere from one and a half to three hours have become common at our California/Baja California border crossings, placing a stranglehold on commerce between California and Mexico, and undermining the competitiveness of the region.

Existing wait times have a huge adverse economic impact, not only on our region but on the national economies of the U.S. and Mexico. A study, commissioned by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), on the Economic Impacts of Cross-Border Wait Times in the California-Baja California Border Region, cites the following economic impacts:

Annual Output Lost for 2007 - US Dollars
Personal Travel and Freight Movements

Table with 3 columns: United States, Mexico, and US and Mexico (column 1+2). Rows list economic impacts for All U.S., All California, San Diego County, Imperial County, All Mexico, All Baja California, Tijuana, Tecate, Rosarito and Ensenada, and Mexicali.

Hon. Eduardo Sojo Garza Aldape
Hon. Carlos Gutierrez
Hon. Juan Camilo Mouriño Terrazo
Hon. Michael Chertoff
February 25, 2008
Page 2

The corresponding job losses from existing wait times are also substantial. The Caltrans study reports the following:

Annual Lost Jobs for 2007
Personal Travel and Freight Movements

<u>United States</u>	<u>Mexico</u>	<u>US and Mexico (column 1+2)</u>
All U.S. = 55,675	All Mexico = 18,258	73,932
All California = 49,830	All Baja California = 12,572	62,402
San Diego County = 41,678	Tijuana, Tecate, Rosarito and Ensenada = 9,982	51,660
Imperial County = 3,935	Mexicali = 2,690	6,625

These problems will get much worse unless there is prompt action to make the border work. According to the Caltrans study, traffic delays and economic losses are expected to **double** over the next 10 years in light of forecasted population increases. At the national level, this means \$10.7 billion in lost output for the US; \$6.56 billion in lost output for Mexico; and a combined lost output of \$17.26 billion, per year.

To confront these issues, the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce's Mexico Business Center convened a *United States-Mexico Border Efficiency Conference* for the California/Baja California Region in San Diego on February 8, 2008. The conference was attended by over 100 border stakeholders. Panelists included federal, state and municipal authorities from both sides of the border plus representatives of the private sector (a list of the panelists is attached). The panelists presented a series of recommendations on short-term improvements to operations and medium term capital improvements that will reduce wait times at California/Mexico Ports of Entry without compromising national security.

The recommendations for short-term relief include the following:

- Additional SENTRI and FAST lanes
- Double-stacking regular lanes to speed up the inspection times
- Additional inspectors to keep all lanes open during peak times
- Improvements to bottlenecks at the entry to the San Ysidro crossing on the Mexican side
- Improved access and signage for all crossings on the Mexican side
- The installation of *smart* border technology capable of reading RFID technology efficiently and without delay

The recommendations for the medium term focused on improvements to existing infrastructure and new Ports of Entry. The two sides agreed that it is critical to accelerate such projects as the proposed Otay Mesa East/Mesa de Otay II Port of Entry, a proposed new Cross-Border U.S.

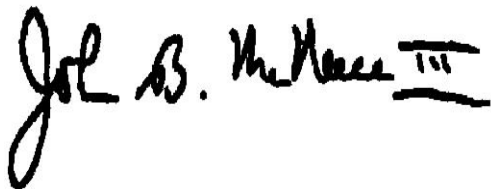
Hon. Eduardo Sojo Garza Aldape
Hon. Carlos Gutierrez
Hon. Juan Camilo Mouriño Terrazo
Hon. Michael Chertoff
February 25, 2008
Page 3

Terminal for Tijuana's Rodriguez Field Airport, and the proposed rebuilding of the San Ysidro Port of Entry, including incorporation of a northbound crossing through the old Virginia Ave. (Chaparral) commercial facility.

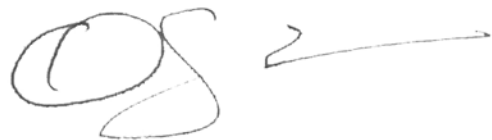
A detailed list of recommendations for improvements to each of the California/Baja California Ports of Entry is attached. The co-chairs of the *United States-Mexico Border Efficiency Conference* pledge to work with elected officials, border agencies and stakeholders on the implementation of these recommendations.

More broadly, the panelists agreed that more collaboration between the U.S. and Mexican government and their appropriate agencies is needed to improve border crossings across the entire California-Baja California Border. San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders and Tijuana Mayor Jorge Ramos already have taken steps to strengthen collaboration by announcing last month that they will establish a bi-national working group that will coordinate advocacy and planning efforts with regard to border infrastructure improvements. We urge you, as the senior officials in the U.S. and Mexico responsible for economic development, to work with state and local officials in California and Baja California, so that together we can make our border work, for the benefit of both the United States and Mexico, while ensuring national security.

Respectfully,



John B. McNeece III
Co-Chair
*United States-Mexico
Border Efficiency Conference*
Immediate Past Chair
Mexico Business Center/
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce



Oscar Escobedo Carignan
Co-Chair
*United States-Mexico
Border Efficiency Conference*
Secretario
Secretaría de Turismo
Baja California

Attachments: Border Efficiency Conference - List of Panelists
Border Efficiency Conference - Recommendations