

**CITY OF EL PASO, TEXAS  
AGENDA ITEM DEPARTMENT HEAD'S SUMMARY FORM**

**DEPARTMENT:** International Bridges Department  
**AGENDA DATE:** Public Hearing: June 21, 2022  
**CONTACT PERSON/PHONE:** David A. Coronado, (915) 212-7505,  
[CoronadoDA@elpasotexas.gov](mailto:CoronadoDA@elpasotexas.gov)  
**DISTRICT(S) AFFECTED:** All Districts  
**STRATEGIC GOAL:** Goal #1: Create an environment conducive to strong sustainable economic development

**SUBJECT:**  
International Bridges Department Management Update

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:**  
Over the last seven years, the International Bridges Department (IBD) has gone through a major transformation. This transformation began in 2015 with the restructuring of the department as a first step to leverage the City of El Paso International Bridges for economic development purposes. This management update provides a brief synopsis of these changes, the progress and accomplishments achieved thus far as a result of the City of El Paso's efforts to improve the regional international bridge system. Some of the major steps and accomplishments in recent years are outlined below and include the following:

1. Successful department restructuring and transformation
2. New approach in managing the international bridges as economic development tools
3. Approval of permanent P3 program with U.S. Customs and Border Protection
4. Adoption of new comprehensive International Bridges Capital Improvement Program
5. Creation of a bi-national Bridges Steering Committee (unique in the entire U.S.-México border)
6. \$32 million funding secured for new Intelligent Transportation System at BOTA and Ysleta
7. Development and implementation of the International Bridges Crossborder Survey to quantify social and expenditure activities and their relationship with the regional economy
8. Completion of the 2021 Texas-México Border Transportation Master Plan

Overall, the International Bridges Department is committed to continue leading these efforts and working with the members of the Bridges Steering Committee and other regional stakeholders on several fronts to improve and modernize the international bridge system that connects and benefits the El Paso del Norte region.

**PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION:**  
N/A

**AMOUNT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**  
N/A

\*\*\*\*\*REQUIRED AUTHORIZATION\*\*\*\*\*

**LEGAL:** (if required)

**FINANCE:** (if required)

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** David Coronado, MPA  
Managing Director for International Bridges and Economic Development

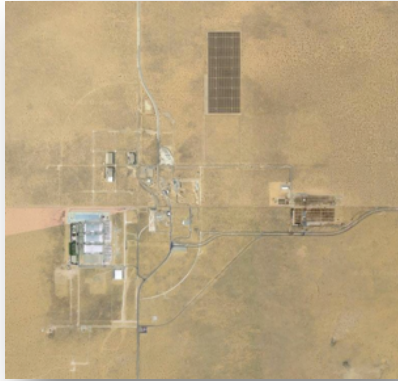
  
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**APPROVED FOR AGENDA:**

**CITY MANAGER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

LAST REVISED: MARCH 22, 2022



# CITY OF EL PASO

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

SUMMARY REPORT



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last seven years, the International Bridges Department (IBD) has gone through a major transformation – not only in terms of its internal structure but also regarding its approach, focus areas, priorities and objectives. This transformation began in 2015 with the restructuring of the department as a first step to leverage the City of El Paso International Bridges for economic development purposes. This white paper provides the reader with a brief synopsis of these changes, the progress and accomplishments achieved thus far as a result of the City of El Paso’s efforts to improve the regional international bridge system.

Some of the major steps and accomplishments in recent years are outlined in greater detail in this document and include the following:

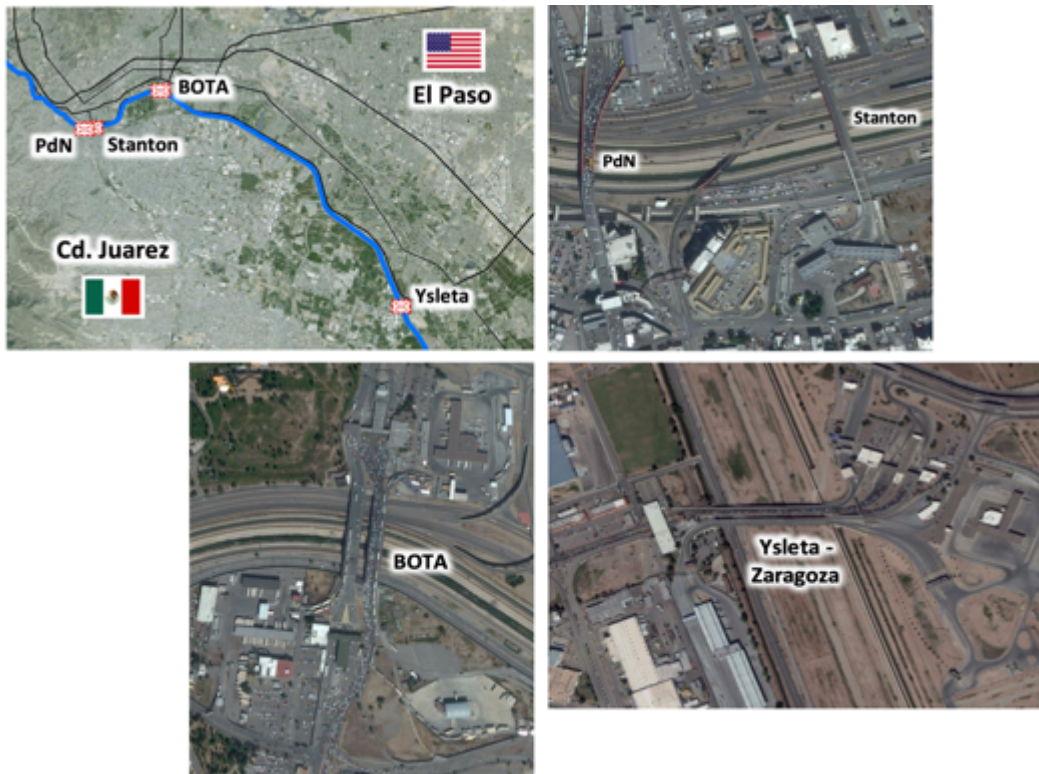
1. Successful department restructuring and transformation
2. New approach in managing the international bridges as economic development tools
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8. Completion of the 2021 Texas-México Border Transportation Master Plan

In addition to discussing these topics, this white paper also includes several other documents and briefings that are relevant to the international bridge system improvement efforts in our region led by the City of El Paso. The City is committed to continue leading these efforts and working with the members of the Bridges Steering Committee and other regional stakeholders on several fronts to improve and modernize the international bridge system that connects and benefits the El Paso del Norte region.

**INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES SYSTEM OVERVIEW**

The City of El Paso is the sixth largest city in Texas, the 22nd largest city in the United States (U.S.), and shares an international border with México to the south and the state of New Mexico to the west and north. El Paso and its neighbor Ciudad (Cd.) Juárez, México form the second largest bi-national metro area along the U.S.-México border with a population of 2.4 million people. These two sister cities share a strong crossborder relationship that is witnessed by thousands of daily crossings through the regional international bridge system that contribute to strong social and economic ties. Within the City, the international crossings include four ports of entry (POEs) – as depicted in the map montage below, from west to east, the Paso Del Norte (PDN) Bridge, the Stanton Street Bridge, Bridge of the Americas (BOTA), and the Ysleta-Zaragoza Bridge.

**Map Montage.** El Paso – Cd. Juárez International Bridges



All four POEs combined contribute significantly to the local, regional and national economies. During 2021, the City of El Paso ranked second in personal vehicle crossings (near 8.9 million), second in pedestrian crossings (over 4.0 million) among all land ports in North America and third in cargo crossings (almost 850,000) when compared to other border communities along the U.S.-México border (sixth in North America). Also in 2021, \$84.8 billion of trade value passed through the City of El Paso ports. Approximately 87% of this trade travels via commercial trucks and the remaining 13% mainly via

rail and pipeline. Needless to say, U.S. and Mexican non-border areas also benefit from this intense crossborder trade with México as well as numerous other countries that ship their products through our POEs.

Despite the clear social and economic significance the international bridge system brings to the region, it has experienced neglect and seen little investment over the years. The City of El Paso owns, maintains and operates three of the regional bridges, two in the downtown area (PDN and Stanton in **Picture 1**), and one in the east side of town (Ysleta / Zaragoza in **Picture 2**). These three border crossings have mainly served as a revenue source to the City via bridge tolls. However, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Reimbursable Services Program approved in 2013 and the Strategic Plan adopted by the City Council in 2015 set a new direction to look the international bridges as a system and as an economic development tool in addition to redefining the role the International Bridges Department plays within the City of El Paso structure and, most importantly, the El Paso-Cd. Juárez region.

**Picture 1.** Paso del Norte and Stanton Street Bridges



**Picture 2.** Ysleta / Zaragoza Bridge



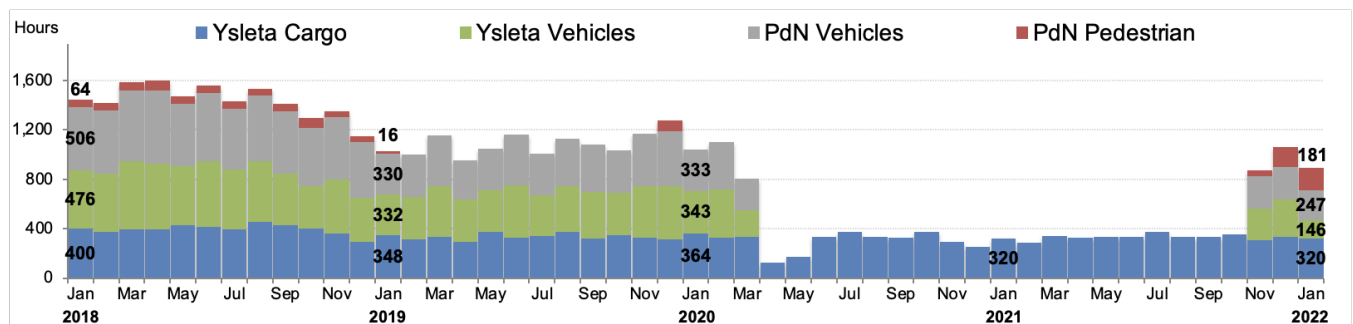
**U.S. CBP REIMBURSABLE SERVICES PROGRAM (P3 PROGRAM)**

In 2013, El Paso was one of the first five entities in the United States selected by the federal government to join the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Reimbursable Services Program. This quasi-Public-Private-Partnership (P3) program has allowed the City to assist CBP with additional funding (collected through bridge tolls) to pay for CBP staff overtime to open additional inspection lanes at the bridges during peak hours and to help reduce or stabilize northbound wait times. This program started in January, 2014 and was renewed annually for four years until 2018 when it was made permanent by the City Council.

Since 2014, the City of El Paso has spent over \$12 million finding over 100,000 CBP overtime hours at city-owned bridges in all three modes of crossings. The benefits are significant and represent direct cost savings due to wait time reductions that benefit the private sector including the manufacturing and trucking industry. Understanding these benefits and how critical trade is to the regional economy, the City of El Paso continued to provide financial support to CBP in the commercial environment at the Ysleta/Zaragoza bridge during the current pandemic. However, support was paused for overtime hours for privately owned vehicle and pedestrian crossings during the time that crossborder travel restrictions were in place from March 2020 through November 2021.

Once the federal government began Phase I of the reopening in November 2021, the City of El Paso restarted immediately the P3 program to include support in the privately owned vehicle and pedestrian environments (see **Graph 1**). International Bridges Department and CBP staff since then have been monitoring crossing volume activity and making adjustments to the overtime schedule in order to be able to address staffing critical needs during peak times at both the Ysleta and Paso del Norte bridges.

**Graph 1: Number of P3 hours funded**



### INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES DEPARTMENT TRANSFORMATION

Under the direction of the City Manager and aligned with our then new Strategic Plan, the City of El Paso took the first step to leverage the City's international bridges for economic development purposes to address operations, infrastructure, technology upgrades and other critical needs. Accordingly, the International Bridges Department underwent a major restructuring and transformation in several ways (see **Appendix A**).

First, the International Bridges Department added three key positions that were filled by individuals with a deep background in data analysis, project management, economics, public policy, program evaluation, and survey research. Their experience has been benefiting the department (and its customers) by providing a better understanding of crossborder mobility, wait times, managing and measuring the benefits of the City of El Paso's P3 program with CBP, and improving parking meter management policies. One of the most recent examples of their efforts is the International Bridges Crossborder Survey launched in the Fall of 2019. The objective of this unprecedented study is to quantify crossborder social and expenditure activities and their relationship to the regional economy. This project was conducted in collaboration with a team of researchers from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. The survey documents social and economic activities and sheds light into the magnitude of retail and service expenditures made by crossborder individuals. A stratified random sampling methodology was implemented and in-person interviews were conducted all days of the week at the PDN, BOTA and Ysleta/Zaragoza bridges (see **Pictures 3 and 4**) on pedestrian and vehicle lanes on the Mexican side. The initial survey period was from October 1, 2019 to March 17, 2020. It was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic which threatened the health of the respondents and interviewers in addition to the travel restrictions that significantly lowered crossborder traffic. Nevertheless, the study will resume as soon as conditions allow, tentatively in the summer of 2022. This core team has also successfully assisted other city departments (e.g. Sun Metro, Economic Development, El Paso International Airport, and the Police Department, among others) in data analysis and in identifying areas of opportunity to improve services provided by the City by offering data-driven decisions.

**Picture 3.** Paso del Norte POV (left) | **Picture 4.** Ysleta/Zaragoza POV (right)





### BRIDGES STEERING COMMITTEE

Along with the Department Transformation, the International Bridges Department established in 2015 a bi-national Bridges Steering Committee (BSC) – unique in the entire U.S.-México border. Since then, IBD staff has been managing and facilitating BSC meetings and work sessions with an emphasis on improving bridge infrastructure and inspection processing to facilitate trade and the movements of people and goods safely and securely through all regional ports of entry. This new collaborative effort created a much-needed venue for all government agencies, business groups and other key bridge stakeholders to come together and work on the issues affecting the international ports of entry. These issues may range from local operational issues and traffic queuing problems to the national migrant crisis along the southern border faced in 2019 in addition to the impacts on crossborder traffic caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Essentially, the BSC provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and on-going conversations about how the region responds to planned and unplanned events as well as coordination needed to manage active and future bridge improvement projects with all stakeholders engaged (see **Picture 5**).

**Picture 5.** Bridges Steering Committee meeting – November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019



The BSC has been instrumental in finding ways to manage the impacts caused by major unexpected events such as the 2019 migrant crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. It has helped facilitate coordination efforts between all government agencies and stakeholders and also in pursuing opportunities to improve the regional bridge system. Over the last two years since the start of the pandemic, the BSC has continued its coordination efforts by holding monthly virtual work sessions. Below is the list of partner government agencies and stakeholders who are part of this bi-national collaborative.

**Bridges Steering Committee Membership**

**United States**

Border Industrial Association	Texas Dept. of Transportation El Paso
Borderplex Alliance	Texas State Secretary of State Office
Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
City of El Paso (IBD, PD, PI)	U.S. Federal Protective Service
County of El Paso	U.S. General Services Administration
El Paso Community Foundation	U.S. Consulate
Metropolitan Planning Organization	U.S. Department of Transportation
Southwest Maquiladora Association	UTEP – Civil Engineering Department
Texas Department of Public Safety	

**México**

Asociación de Transportistas  
Fideicomiso de Puentes Fronterizos de Chihuahua  
Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua  
IMIP (Jrz. Planning Office)  
INDEX (Maquiladora Association)  
Municipio de Juárez  
Servicio de Administración Tributaria  
Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores

### INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES COMPREHENSIVE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Shortly after the BSC was created, the City of El Paso led a multi-year Lean Six Sigma (LSS) project to look at several infrastructure and technology enhancements needed at the ports of entry to help expedite the flow of traffic and increase throughput safely and securely. This was led by LSS Black and Green Belts from both El Paso and Cd. Juárez. Over the course of this LSS project, City staff engaged with the BSC in POE site visits (see **Picture 6** and **7**), stakeholder interviews, process mapping exercises and in multiple brainstorming sessions to identify potential bridge improvement ideas. Applying LSS methodologies provided all these stakeholders with an opportunity to build new relationships and form project teams to develop multiple improvement projects at the regional ports.

**Picture 6 and 7.** BSC Site Visit at Bridge of the Americas (cargo lot)



These efforts resulted in the creation of an initial comprehensive list of more than 100 improvement ideas and potential projects to address the most critical needs at the region's ports of entry in the passenger, pedestrian, and commercial environments at all international bridges – not only in the U.S. side but also on the Mexican side of the border (see **Picture Set 1** below). These improvement ideas address critical needs in local, state and federally owned or controlled facilities. These ideas also have a great spectrum, they are potential infrastructure projects that will help eliminate bottlenecks that impede the flow of vehicles causing queuing, they add amenities for pedestrians, provide additional traffic cameras for security and traffic monitoring or call for an expansion and modernization feasibility study at Ysleta/Zaragoza to name a few. Based on this list, the El Paso City Council approved its first ever International Bridges Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in December 2018. This CIP is being fully funded by bridge toll revenue collected via the P3 program as well as by the state transportation funding awarded to the City. Of note is the fact that these programs and efforts undertaken by the BSC and the IBD are all being funded by bridge users. There is no impact to the tax rate and no debt has been issued to fund these efforts or additional projects.

Picture Set 1. Improvement Ideas by POE



**PDN & Stanton  
20 improvement ideas**



**Bridge of the Americas  
48 improvement ideas**



**Ysleta-Zaragoza  
47 improvement ideas**

**INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (RIDER 44)**

Another result of the BSC efforts is that the City of El Paso received for the first time ever \$32 million in state transportation funding that will fund several infrastructure improvements and technology upgrades with the objective of increasing security measures, help with crossborder traffic management, as well as facilitating and expediting trade at the Bridge of the Americas and the Ysleta/Zaragoza Bridge. Specifically, the project will consist of the design, construction, and installation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to include dynamic message signs, traffic cameras, wait-time collection devices, fiber optic cable and conduit, geometric improvements at BOTA and traffic management facilities and tolls systems upgrades. Some of the key benefits associated with deploying these technologies include:

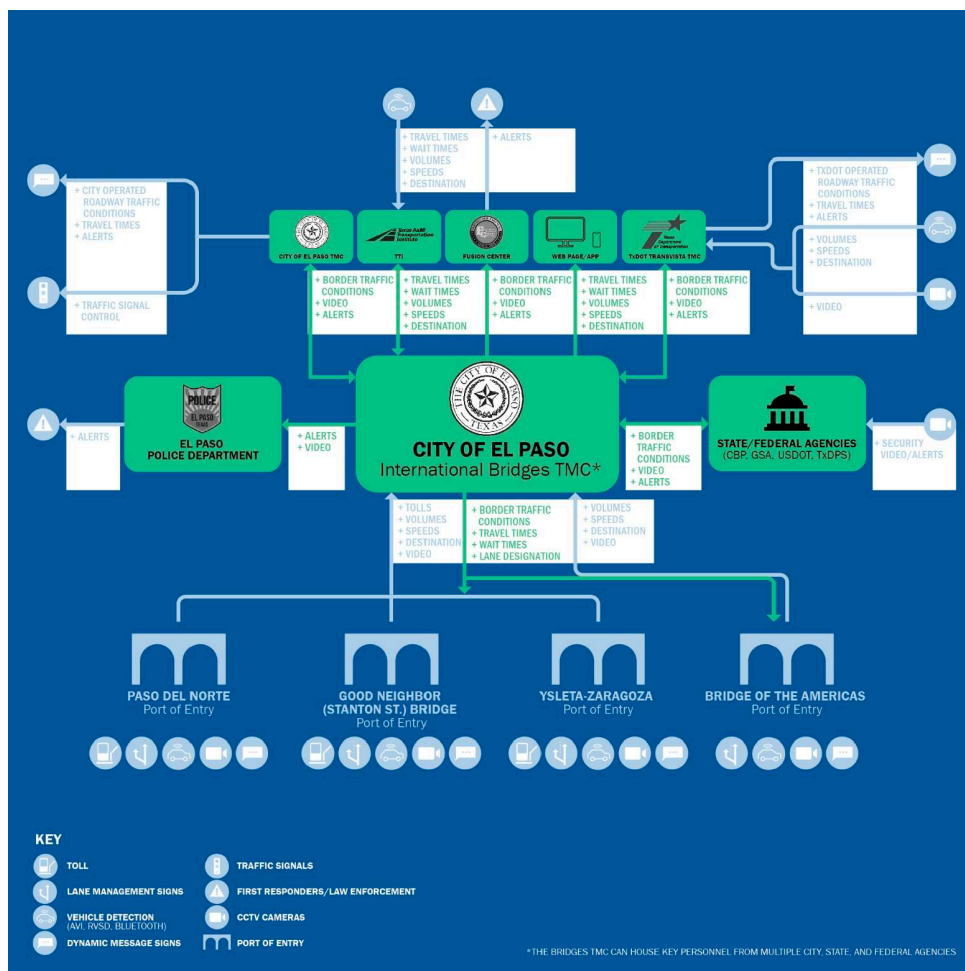
- Improve the ability to communicate real-time traffic conditions to the traveling public.
- Improve traffic operations at the ports, increasing reliability and efficiency.
- Strengthen bi-national multiagency collaboration.
- Reduce traffic congestion.
- Enhance security measures and enable close coordination with federal, state, and local law enforcement to address current and anticipated future security needs.
- Improve response times for first responders as they will be able to identify and monitor traffic incidents and port closures that can cause delays in addition to having a better understanding of incident locations and severity.
- Additional access to video feeds that will enable remote monitoring to view traffic queues, incidents, port closures and suspicious activity.

The International Bridges Department is developing this project in coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation and several other key stakeholders including U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute and the Texas Department of Public Safety. In addition, coordination with Fideicomiso de Puentes Fronterizos de Chihuahua (MX bridge tolling authority) is critical to ensure that new ITS equipment on both sides of the border is inter-operable to allow for data sharing and compatible RFID tags for electronic payments. Once completed, these improvement projects, in conjunction with the City of El Paso's ongoing P3 program with CBP, will help with the objectives of reducing or stabilizing wait times, facilitating and expediting trade safely and securely and promoting economic development opportunities.

To complement these efforts, the City of El Paso International Bridges Department commissioned the development of an El Paso ITS POE Concept of Operations (ConOps) to address the need and legislative

mandate for supportive infrastructure to manage congestion, improve safety, reduce incidents and regulate ongoing crossborder travel at the four POEs within the City of El Paso, TX. This ConOps (see **Appendix B**) was developed following the systems engineering process as defined by the International Council of Systems Engineering. It aims to identify bridge operator needs and, in short, it provides a roadmap for US and MX government agencies and bridge operators on managing crossborder traffic, improve coordination efforts and how to work side by side in the event of emergency situations, to name a few. A proposed ITS system concept (see **Figure 1** below) outlines these relationships and data and information transfers required for a fully integrated bi-national ITS system.

**Figure 1. Proposed ITS System Concept**



In collaboration with the BSC, the City of El Paso has also developed [PDNuno.com](http://PDNuno.com), a bilingual website that is being used to alert the traveling public of existing conditions at each of the City’s ports of entry including historical crossings data, border-crossing wait-time information, live camera feeds from City-owned bridges, travel notices, the results of the International Bridges Crossborder Survey, FAQs, and

the contact information of agencies represented in the BSC and who are responsible for the management and operation of the regional border crossings. The new ITS enhancements at BOTA and Ysleta/Zaragoza will allow the City to share additional and more reliable information to the public via this website as they plan their trips to and from El Paso – whether as a pedestrian, in a personal vehicle or commercial truck.

### US-MX BORDER TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

The International Bridges Department (IBD) and the Capital Improvements Department of the City of El Paso worked closely with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and other regional stakeholders over the last three years on completing the new 2021 Texas-México Border Transportation Master Plan (BTMP). The BTMP efforts began in December 2018 when TxDOT first held the kick-off meeting for this bi-national effort. The final plan was adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission in March 2021. This effort was led by TxDOT in close coordination with the Border Trade Advisory Committee and included representation from a number of agencies and partners in both the U.S. and the Mexican states bordering with Texas. The BTMP is a comprehensive, multi-modal, long-range plan that identified several policies, programs and project recommendations to address issues and needs across the TX-MX border for the benefit of the international bridge system, surrounding communities and the rest of the state.

The City of El Paso’s International Bridges Department was heavily involved throughout the process and assisted in providing recommendations to ensure that the regional needs were discussed in the plan. IBD also coordinated with several other City departments including the Capital Improvements Department, the El Paso International Airport, Sun Metro, Streets and Maintenance and Planning and Inspections to gather feedback and information on projects and infrastructure needs in the community. The Bridges Steering Committee also played a key role in ensuring that regional needs were identified. The BSC membership attended several public meetings held by the TxDOT throughout the process. As a result, the City of El Paso in coordination with the BSC identified and provided TxDOT with close to 300 bi-national projects to include in the plan (see **Appendix C**). The projects cost estimates amount to over \$11 billion and address needs at the ports of entry as well as in the main corridors and surrounding areas in both the U.S. and México.





### LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS AND PRIORITY NEEDS

The City of El Paso is currently pursuing federal funds in the form of grants to complete critical regional projects in an effort to modernize and improve the international bridge system. Under the American Rescue Plan Act, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) was allocated \$3 billion in supplemental funding to assist communities nationwide in their efforts to build back better by accelerating economic recovery from the corona virus pandemic. A subset of those dollars, approximately \$500 million, was allocated for Economic Adjustment Assistant grants. In December, 2021 and in alignment with the Strategic Plan 25 by 2025, the City applied for a \$1 million grant (see **Appendix D**) to conduct a feasibility study that will analyze opportunities to improve the Stanton Street Corridor as well as modernize and possibly expand the Stanton Street bridge to include pedestrian amenities and ITS technologies among others. This grant places an emphasis on the importance of the Stanton Street bridge but also expands into the surrounding area.

The proposed feasibility study has six areas of focus as follows:

1. Enhanced pedestrian amenities and safety measures
2. Beautification of the area
3. Improve traffic control measures along Stanton Street
4. Explore the introduction of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
5. Possible port expansion (additional SENTRI lanes, multi-modal lanes, etc.)
6. Property acquisition and construction

The City is currently pending a response from EDA on whether the funding will be made available and has committed \$300 thousand as the local match for the project. The City has also began preparing a second grant application with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). This subsequent effort is aligned with the new \$1.5 billion in grant funding available through the Rebuilding America Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant program. This program helps communities around the country carry out projects with significant regional impact. The City is pursuing \$12 million in funding to help construct pedestrian safety improvements and amenities at the Ysleta/Zaragoza bridge (see **Appendix E**).

The list of proposed improvements include:

1. Dedicated pedestrian drop-off and pick-up zones
2. Protection from the elements (shade canopies)
3. Improved cross-walks at intersections
4. Pedestrian-level light fixtures, raised pedestrian crossings, marked crosswalks, median islands, pedestrian warning signs and signals, traffic calming techniques, etc.

5. Streetlights
6. Landscaping improvements
7. Seating areas
8. Screening walls for security
9. CCTVs for security
10. Sun Metro bus stop
11. Wayfinding signs

If awarded, the City committed to provide \$3 million as the local match for the project. This funding will be provided from toll revenues via the P3 program. Once completed, this construction project will help complement the recently completed pedestrian improvements at Ysleta/Zaragoza on the Mexican side (see **Picture 8**).

**Picture 8:** Ysleta/Zaragoza Bridge



Additional funding dedicated to bridge infrastructure projects to facilitate the movement of people and goods across the border is critical to the region. For this reason, the City of El Paso will also pursue alternate sources of funding in order to complete a feasibility study for the expansion and modernization of the Ysleta/Zaragoza bridge.

Such a feasibility study will focus on the following issues:

1. Study existing conditions (site, surrounding land uses, transportation, natural environment, utilities, buildings, etc.)
2. Study and evaluate current port of entry design layout to include local, state and federal properties and facilities

3. Explore overall port expansion into adjacent vacant properties for added capacity and increase in throughput commensurate with demand across all modes
4. Explore construction of new dedicated pedestrian bridge with enhanced amenities
5. Design and evaluate the expansion of existing City of El Paso operations facilities to support port expansion and additional traffic demand
6. Expansion of vehicle and cargo northbound facilities. This supports eastside growth from population and industry related activities.
7. Enhanced pedestrian amenities (includes: shade canopies, raised cross-walks, sidewalk improvements, lighting, landscaping areas and various pedestrian safety improvements)
8. Incorporate public plaza area similar to Stanton & PDN as a pedestrian amenity (including public restrooms and other amenities for pedestrians)
9. Public parking and access to public transportation
10. Technology solutions to provide accurate wait times
11. Explore alternate modes of transportation such as a freight shuttle or similar automated system technologies
12. Introduction of multi-modal or stacked lanes
13. Propose and evaluate opportunities for the use and installation of Intelligent Transportation Systems and related technologies in an effort to modernize the port
14. Evaluate and design expansion and relocation of City of El Paso commercial traffic toll booth facilities
15. Improved traffic control measures for vehicular traffic (POV lane assignments and dividers for southbound traffic) and cargo traffic
16. Reconfiguration, modernization and expansion of CBP cargo lot to include primary, non-intrusive and secondary inspection facilities
17. Reconfiguration, modernization and expansion of FMCSA and DPS inspection facilities
18. Evaluate and propose use new technologies (traffic cameras, automated systems, machine learning, etc.) available to monitor and measure throughput of international bridge traffic across all modes
19. Prepare and analyze future traffic projections and evaluate the implementation of alternative pricing technologies such as variable or dynamic pricing

These long-term investments and priority needs will have a significant impact and will benefit the region. However, local funding is extremely limited and, as stated previously, for this reason the City of El Paso is pursuing alternate sources of funding to make progress in these high value projects. Currently, the bipartisan infrastructure bill recently approved will provide with several funding opportunities and the City is committed to pursuing these as they become available.

## CHALLENGES

The international bridge system has experienced the impacts of countless socio-economic events in the recent history that have fundamentally transformed and changed the way it operates. These events include, among others, economic recessions, terrorist attacks such as those seen in 9/11, the migrant crisis in 2019, violence in Mexico and exchange rate fluctuations to name a few. In addition to these externalities, the bridge system also faces numerous challenges that hinder its ability to quickly adjust to changing times, technologies, population growth, system capacity, and demand. Below is a list of challenges the region faces when it comes to ensuring that the border crossings operate at an optimum level and respond adequately to the demands from bridge users across all modes, whether they come from pedestrians, privately owned vehicles, or commercial trucks. These challenges include:

1. Rio Grande 'navigable waterway' designation: This designation imposed by the federal government to the entire length of the Rio Grande along the U.S.-MX border from El Paso to the Gulf of México should be revised for the west Texas region considering that the climate and natural environment are different from those in the valley. Removing or providing an exception for El Paso County and other west Texas regions would, in the future, significantly help facilitate and reduce construction costs of a new, remodeled, or expanded international bridge.
2. Limited funding: Historically, the international bridge system has seen limited investments in the areas of infrastructure and technology improvements at all levels of government. The City of El Paso, over the last seven years, has made significant progress in this area but additional support is needed from state and federal government agencies. The City has, via its P3 Program, made investments in infrastructure, donated projects and provided over \$12 million in funding to CBP to fund overtime hours for agents to open additional lanes and help reduce or stabilize northbound wait times. Unfortunately, the City funding is limited and the needs have been increasing over time. An indication that staffing at the ports of entry remains an issue and little progress has been made in this area. This leads to the international bridges not operating at full capacity generating congestion, backups, adding to vehicle emissions and impacting the regional economy.
3. System/equipment issues in Mexico and the lack of a similar P3 Program: The Mexican Customs have been investing and modernizing their equipment and systems in recent years; however, it is our understanding that these systems are frequently down or present issues significantly delaying processes and causing congestions and backups, particularly for personal vehicles and cargo trucks. Adding to this issue, the Mexican federal government has not created a parallel P3 Program that would allow private support and investments in infrastructure, equipment and/or staffing levels within federally controlled facilities at the ports of entry. Such a program may prove beneficial as it would complement the efforts, scheduling and operations performed in the U.S. and may facilitate efforts to manage the POEs as one synchronized bi-national system.