



# Foreign Trade Association

*Facilitating Secure Movement Across the Border*

## **Why El Paso Needs more Ports of Entry.**

The FTA has pursued increased efficiency in the Federal cross border inspection process since 1985 and assisted in bringing the first FAST Lane and Dedicated Commuter Lane programs on the US/Mexico Border. Nevertheless, in recent years, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has advised and directed that more Ports of Entry be built for increased security and coverage of the US/Mexico Border.

In 2004, following similar studies along the US/Mexico Border , the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization commenced a study process and concluded in 2007, after examining all area existing ports of entry from Santa Teresa to Tornillo, that substantial improvements to international mobility could be achieved by:

- (1) Increased efficiency and staffing in the Federal inspection processes at all ports of entry.
- (2) Some limited expansion improvement to existing bridges, and
- (3) Development of new Ports of Entry is critical to sustain regional competitiveness in the movement of people, goods, and services.

With the growing security pressures and the Dept. of Homeland Security urging that more infrastructure be built, the Foreign Trade Association has focused on actively supporting the recommended concept of a new port of entry between the Bridge of the Americas and Zaragoza POE. Because of the anticipated improvements and planning for the Cesar Chavez Border Highway in order to decrease I-10 congestion, the target area for the new bridge became more defined. From the outset, the concept was to limit cross border travelers' access only to the underused Cesar Chavez Border Highway. With the expansion of Fort Bliss, it was anticipated that congestion would only worsen on I-10 if Border Highway Relief was not undertaken.

An added advantage was that Cd. Juarez has been in full support of a new bridge at this location since the 1990s, when plans began with previous El Paso Mayors for an additional crossing, for vehicles only, within the Border Highway target area. The target area is a function of pressure point locations which require solutions. Over the years, the FTA has assisted in the presentation of the new Border Highway Port of Entry Project to the U.S. State Dept, the US Dept. of Homeland Security, Congressman Reyes and his El Paso and Washington DC staff, the General Service Administration, and the State of Texas. The presentation includes a discussion

**about the importance of increased international mobility to support the US citizens who work in Cd. Juarez, plus the tens of thousands of El Paso residents who commute daily for shopping, family visits, health care needs, as well as businesses who service this important North American manufacturing center.**

**Historically, the FTA has been a leader in cross border projects and undertook an eight- year task to seek a solution to finance and replace the existing International Cordova-Bridge of the Americas. The project resulted in the International Boundary and Water Commission replacing two spans and re-opening the bridge to commercial and vehicular traffic in 1998. Nevertheless, the expansion of existing bridges is limited. The cross border inspection process mandated by congress and implemented by CBP continues to add layers of complications. Even with more staff, more technology and more expedited procedures, the inspection process will still result in significant delays.**

**As a community, we need to continue a study process to build more Ports of Entry.**