

San Diego Association of Governments

BORDERS COMMITTEE

January 16, 2004

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **1**

Action Requested: APPROVE

BORDERS COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS

Meeting of December 12, 2003

The regularly scheduled meeting of the San Diego Association of Governments Borders Committee was called to order by Chair Crystal Crawford (North County Coastal). Other members in attendance were Ed Gallo (North County Inland) and alternates Phil Monroe (South County), Judy Ritter (North County Inland), Pam Slater (County of San Diego). Ex-Officio members in attendance were Thomas Buckley (Riverside County), Pedro Orso-Delgado (Caltrans), Lydia Antonio (Republic of Mexico), and Angelika Villagrana representing the COBRO.

Chair Crawford welcomed everyone to the meeting and self-introductions were made.

1. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 7, 2003 MEETING MINUTES

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/MEMBER COMMENTS

There were no comments at this time.

CONSENT ITEMS (3 and 4)

3. COMMITTEE ON BINATIONAL REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES SUMMARY AND ACTIONS

4. I-15 INTERREGIONAL PARTNERSHIP POLICY COMMITTEE (I-15 IRP) SUMMARY AND ACTIONS

Action: The Borders Committee approved Item #1 with minor revisions and Consent Items 3, and 4.

REPORTS

5. LAS CALIFORNIAS BINATIONAL CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Anne McEnany, International Community Foundation (ICF), provided a brief recap of the presentation she made to the Borders Committee on November 7, 2003 regarding the Las Californias Binational Conservation Initiative. The ICF is requesting support for the creation of a study area a binational wildlife corridor which would extend the Otay Mountain Wilderness Area south into Mexico (east of Tecate). This area is considered a global conservation hotspot. Conservation of this binational wildlife corridor is an urgent priority because of the threat posed by rapid urbanization from eastern Tijuana. More data is needed in order to justify the need for designating this region as a conservation priority in Mexico. ICF has been funding this effort for the last few years but, in order to become eligible for funds from Congress to conduct a more

comprehensive study, the region must be designated by the U.S. Department of Interior as a conservation study area.

Chair Crawford asked if there was any support from local representatives to Congress. Ms McEnany replied that Rep. Bob Filner has endorsed the project and that he suggested that support from SANDAG would be critical.

There was concern from several committee members as to whether Mexican agencies would be contributing to this project financially. Ms. McEnany responded that, although the Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment (SEMARNAT) is very supportive, the Mexican government needs to see more specific data before they can prioritize that area. The ICF has been providing financial support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Mexico and will be partnering with the San Diego Foundation's Environmental Program to support NGOs on the San Diego side.

Action: The Borders Committee recommends that the SANDAG Board of Directors promote congressional support for the U.S. Department of the Interior to designate a study area for the shared watersheds and binational wildlife corridors in the California-Baja California border region.

6. SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF TRADE AND GOODS MOVEMENT BETWEEN CALIFORNIA AND BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO (*Maquiladora* Survey)

Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, provided a brief background on the origins of the Maquiladora Survey. Geoffrey Bogart, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) presented a brief report on a survey they conducted on behalf of Caltrans which looked at border conditions from a commercial user perspective (principally *maquiladora* industry). The users recommended: road infrastructure improvements; dedicated lanes for expedited processes; increased inspection agency staffing; longer and more flexible operating hours; more binational, interagency cooperation; and documentation of the cost of delays.

The Borders Committee discussed the findings of the study. Several members suggested the need for companies to look at the way they do business, given the restrictions of the border crossing. One of the major findings of the study was that over 50% of the products coming across had destinations in other parts of California and rest of the United States. Thus, this issue has implications far beyond the immediate region.

Angelika Villagrana, Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO), reiterated the COBRO's recommendations that: SR-905 remain as one of the regional priorities; the trial period for extending border crossing hours be extended; a working group such as Alliance for Border Efficiency (ABE) continue working on these issues; and competitive wait times of no longer than one hour should be the goal. Pedro Orso explained the funding situation for SR905 stating that the funding is set up in such as way that they will be ready for construction stages before funds are available.

A pilot program was tested during November and part of December to extend hours of operation at the commercial port of entry at Otay Mesa. Results from this program will be made available at a future date.

Action: The Borders Committee accepted the recommendation that additional comments regarding the June 2003 *Maquiladora* Survey be sent to Caltrans and added that Caltrans should be encouraged to pursue innovative funding mechanisms for border-related projects. In addition, the Borders Committee recommended that this report be presented to the Transportation Committee.

7. UPDATE ON THE IMPERIAL VALLEY ISSUES

The Representative from Imperial Valley, Victor Carrillo, was unable to attend today's meeting, so the Committee agreed to defer the item to the February 2004 meeting.

Action: The Borders Committee agreed to continue this item to the February meeting.

8. I-15 INTERREGIONAL PARTNERSHIP (I-15 IRP)

Jeff Martin, SANDAG, provided a brief overview of the I-15 IRP study and highlighted some of the principal strategies being considered. He requested that Borders Committee members review the summary report and recommendations and attend the next meeting which will be held in Temecula with the Riverside partners on January 16, 2004. The main strategies resulting from the study will be recommended. These include economic development, transportation, and housing as ways to mitigate the regional issues associated with jobs/housing mix that lead to long commutes and traffic congestion. The March meeting will focus on ways to implement those strategies. Staff requested feedback from Committee members by March for inclusion in the final report due to the Board of Directors by June 2004.

Phil Monroe requested the inclusion of private sector initiatives in the recommendations and strategies.

9. REPORT ON THE UNITED STATES VISITOR AND IMMIGRANT STATUS INDICATOR TECHNOLOGY (US VISIT) MEETING OF NOVEMBER 17, 2003

Mr. John McNeece, Chair, International Committee, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, provided a brief report on the visit of Mr. Williams, Director for the US VISIT Program of the Department of Homeland Security regarding the US VISIT program. The purpose of the program is to document every foreign national who enters and exits the United States. Mr. McNeece thanked SANDAG for hosting the meetings arranged for elected officials and stakeholder groups on November 17, 2003 and providing staff support. Mr. McNeece felt that, through these meetings, a strong statement was made from local stakeholders and elected officials of how important an efficient and open border is for this region's commerce and regional integration. Mr. Williams, in general, was very receptive to local concerns but was surprised at the degree of misinformation circulating in the region.

According to Mr. Williams: the US VISIT program concerns only holders of visas who have to go to secondary inspection coming north anyway; laser-visa holders will come and go as they do now; the US VISIT program intends to have visa holders add a radio frequency chip to their document, enabling them to "check out" as they leave the country; and they will not implement the program until the appropriate technology is available. Mr. Williams made it clear that his comments are not

adopted policy. Mr. Williams agreed to return to the region and visit Mexicali/Calexico. The need for a specific liaison for future communication regarding the development of the US VISIT program became apparent. It was suggested that Angelika Villagrana, Alliance for Border Efficiency (ABE) and member of COBRO, would be able to serve in that role. Rep. Susan Davis offered to be a conduit in Washington for local concerns. ABE has prepared a letter outlining what was discussed with Mr. Williams and is asking regional stakeholders be kept informed of developments and that their input be considered.

10. REPORT ON THE DISCUSSION OF THE CONCEPT OF EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Phil Monroe presented an update on the concept of Equitable Development. From a discussion held between the Committee' member designated to explore the possibilities of equitable development and SANDAG Executive Director, Gary Gallegos, it was suggested that the one of the strategic tools already in the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) might be adapted to incorporate the notion of Equitable Development – Compacts. Those members suggested bringing the item back for discussion at the February 20, 2004 meeting. Staff has identified several current projects which could serve as test cases, such as the I-15 Interregional Partnership. Another suggestion was that the Borders Committee serve as a mechanism to help solve disputes between jurisdictions, consistent with SANDAG bylaws. Efforts will be made to make sure that the appropriate staff from Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) be present at the January I-15 Interregional Partnership meeting to discuss this approach. A critical issue is establishing which stakeholders should be involved in the Compact. Staff suggests that the issues should be scoped out before the participants are determined.

Action: The Borders Committee agreed to continue discussion on the concept of Equitable Development.

11. BORDER ENERGY ISSUES GROUP

Chair Crystal Crawford reported on the Border Energy Issues Group (BEIG). So far the group has had six meetings. Although the Secretary of Energy of Mexico has not been able to send a representative, they are interested in the group. Thus far, the group has developed a mission statement but has refrained from establishing specific goals until a decision on the Regional Energy Strategy has been formally taken by the Board of Directors. In general, it was suggested that it would be valuable to continue the meetings and seek funding to support this activity.

Chair Crawford introduced Alan Sweedler, Chair, San Diego Regional Energy Office, who has been participating in the BEIG. Prof. Sweedler reiterated the importance of border energy issues as a subset of any regional energy strategy as the border represents unique opportunities for the future of the region. The BEIG is the only public forum in which there is significant input from Mexican energy stakeholders. He added that, in his 20 years of involvement in regional energy issues, this activity is the first time that various stakeholders are coming together to develop a coherent view on energy which will, in turn, provide more leverage for significant funding of that vision. Chair Crawford added that, at the latest meeting in Tijuana earlier in December, there were specific action items presented to the group for consideration by Mexican agencies.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

Next meeting to be held on January 16, 2004 at Temecula City Hall in Temecula, California.