

**San Diego Association of Governments**  
**BORDERS COMMITTEE**

January 21, 2005

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **1b**

**Action Requested: APPROVE**

**BORDERS COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS**  
**TOUR TO IMPERIAL COUNTY**

Meeting of December 2, 2004

The tour to Imperial County was held in lieu of the regularly scheduled meeting of the San Diego Association of Governments Borders Committee. Following are the sequence of events.

**Board Bus**

The tour began at 8:27 a.m. when the bus departed from the SANDAG offices. The attendance sheet for those that attended the tour is attached. Chair Crawford thanked and welcomed the guests for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend today's tour. She mentioned that the agenda for the day was full and there will be lots of interesting things to see. Because of the time limitations, tour participants will not be able to depart the bus. She noted that additional tour participants would be picked up at the I-8 rest stop. Those participants will be the hosts of the tour and from that point, the tour will begin.

**Meet with Imperial County Officials at the I-8 Rest Area**

The bus arrived at the I-8 rest stop at approximately 10:23 p.m. Passengers that were picked up included Imperial County Supervisor Victor Carrillo, a Borders Committee member; Roberta Burns, County Executive Officer of the County of Imperial; Bob Ham, Director of Intergovernmental Relations for the County of Imperial, Arnold San Miguel, representing the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG); and Mark Schanz, a reporter for the Imperial Valley Press.

**Development in the Cities of El Centro and Imperial**

Developments in the cities of El Centro and Imperial were visited. Following are key points of interest that were discussed.

- **Naval Air Facility:** The Naval Air Base in Imperial County has not been affected by the Base Realignment Closure (BRAC). The site is a possible location to re-locate Lindbergh Field.
- **Hay Compress Facilities:** There is a huge market in Asia for hay grown in Imperial County. Forty percent of the hay grown is exported. Agriculture is the largest product that is exported from Imperial County and generates the most income for the county.
- **Housing:** There are currently 21,840 homes under construction or being designed in Imperial Valley. Housing prices will range from \$170,000 to \$400,000. Housing construction for all

homes will be completed within the next two years. Housing costs in Imperial Valley have increased over the past two years by approximately 50 percent.

- **Industrial Distribution Centers:** Packing sheds are the busiest when vegetarian crops are harvested. In addition, cotton is one of the products being distributed as well as pre-fabricated homes. The pre-fabricated home plants employ between 400 and 600 carpenters.
- **Federal Courthouse:** Imperial County has a new Federal Courthouse. Previously, all federal cases for Imperial County were tried in San Diego. Due to the juxtaposition with the Mexican border, there have been more federal public safety issues. Imperial County is the youngest county in the state and was formerly a part of San Diego County.

### **City of Imperial Airport**

Imperial County has received authorization by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to relocate its airport. Open space is not a problem. Currently, two to five jets per week fly in and out of the airport. The existing airport is inadequate because of the increased cargo demands which are changing from an agricultural to a commercial base.

### **Mesquite Power Plant and Holly Sugar Plant**

Sugar beets are considered big crops in Imperial County. Cane sugar is harvested at different times of the year. When the sugar is not being harvested, a by product is used for energy – specifically ethanol and geothermal energy.

### **City of Brawley**

Currently, trucks drive through downtown in Brawley. Caltrans is under construction with a bypass of Highway 111 which should alleviate this problem. The cost of this project is approximately \$108 million. When complete, Highway 111 will connect Highway 86 to I-8; therefore commercial vehicles will not have to drive through downtown Brawley. This will be a major improvement because of the tourists that visit the Sand Dunes. During the holidays and summer weekends, there are as many as 200,000 people that visit.

Brawley has additional activities that are taking place in its city. Following are a few examples:

- **Beef Plant:** Brawley hosts the nation's newest meat packing plant. Its beef is sold in Costco and other major stores in the country. The packing plant employs approximately 700 employees.
- **SDSU Expansion:** A satellite campus is currently located in Brawley. Courses taught include Agricultural Experimentation. At this time, only upper graduate and post graduate classes are being offered. The next phase of the expansion will include dormitories for freshmen only. Currently, there are two student residential houses in Imperial Valley that accommodate 15 students. Eleven of them are foreign exchange students from Europe.
- **Imperial Valley Community College:** This Community College is centrally located in Imperial Valley and has three off-campus sites located in Brawley, Calexico, and El Centro. Imperial Valley College currently has approximately 8,000 full-time students enrolled in both its main and off-campus sites.

- Landfill: A landfill is currently being developed and is scheduled to open in 2007. The current landfill situation is supplied by garbage trains from Los Angeles. There are ten county owned landfills which will be transformed into transfer stations once the landfill is opened.
- Movie Production: The movie, "Jarhead," is currently being filmed.

### **Lunch with the IVAG Regional Council**

Lunch was held at the City of Imperial Fairgrounds. Elected officials from the cities of Brawley and El Centro, Imperial County Supervisors, as well as staff from the City of Calexico also attended.

### **Imperial Valley Mall and the Geothermal Plant**

*Imperial Valley Mall* - The Imperial Valley Mall is the first of its kind in Imperial County. It will include movie theatres and approximately 150 specialty stores. It will have four anchor stores: Dillard's, Robinsons-May, JC Penney and Sears, which will create 1,200 to 1,700 jobs. The mall is scheduled to open on May 9, 2005.

*Geothermal Plants* - There are three geothermal plants in Imperial Valley – Heber, East Mesa and Salton Sea. Imperial Valley has the lowest electric rates in the state partially because it is its own energy provider.

### **City of Calexico**

The City of Calexico is currently expanding its industrial area. The Industrial Park will include the Calexico Tissue Company, a Call Center, Emerson Electronics, Jet Express and Heald Properties. Between these companies, a total of 315 people are employed. In addition, there are new residential developments in the city that are under construction.

### **Calexico East Port of Entry**

The Calexico East Port of Entry (POE) opened in 1997. The POE has 10 lanes. The border between Calexico and Mexicali includes two parts – a fence and the All American Canal. Border patrol agents patrol the area 24-hours per day. Located near the POE is the California Highway Patrol Inspection Facility, which is equivalent to the Otay Mesa Inspection Facility in San Diego. A third POE is being considered to be built in the western portion of the City of Calexico.

### **Additional Information**

Mexicali is developing a new industrial park near the border. This will include converting 10,000 acres to high tech plants and will include research and development, automotive-related, and electronics companies. There are existing maquiladora plants located in the industrial park which include St. Francis Packaging, Valco Industries, and General Dynamics.

## **Tour Conclusion**

After the conclusion of the tour, participants returned to San Diego.

BOB LEITER

Director of Land Use and Transportation Planning

Key Staff Contact: Hector Vanegas, (619) 699-1972; [hva@sandag.org](mailto:hva@sandag.org)

**CONFIRMED ATTENDANCE  
BORDERS COMMITTEE MEETING  
Tour of Imperial County  
December 2, 2004 – 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA/ORGANIZATION	JURISDICTION	NAME	MEMBER/ALTERNATE	ATTENDING
North County Coastal	City of Del Mar	Crystal Crawford (Chair)	Member	Yes
	City of Solana Beach	David Powell	Alternate	No
North County Inland	City of Escondido	Ed Gallo	Member	No
	City of Vista	Judy Ritter	Alternate	No
East County	City of La Mesa	David Allan	Member	Yes
	City of Santee	Hal Ryan	Alternate	No
South County	City of Imperial Beach	Patricia McCoy (Vice Chair) <b>Councilmember Fred McClean attended</b>	Member	No
	City of Coronado	Phil Monroe	Alternate	Yes
City of San Diego	----	Ralph Inzunza	Member	No
	----	Brian Maienschein	Alternate	No
County of San Diego	----	Greg Cox	Member	No
	----	Pam Slater	Alternate	No
Imperial County	County of Imperial	Victor Carrillo	Member	Yes
	City of Calexico	David Ouzan	Alternate	No

## ADVISORY/LIAISON

COBRO	---	Dr. Paul Ganster	Member	No
	---	Cindy Gompers-Graves	Alternate	No
County of Riverside	City of Lake Elsinore	Thomas Buckley	Member	No
Republic of Mexico	Consul General of Mexico	Luis Cabrera Cuaron	Member	No
	Deputy Consul	Javier Diaz		No
	Deputy Consul	Lydia Antonio		No
Caltrans	----	Pedro Orso-Delgado/Bill Figge	Member	Yes/Yes
San Diego County Water Authority	----	James Bond	Member	No
County of Orange	----	<i>Vacant</i>	Member	---