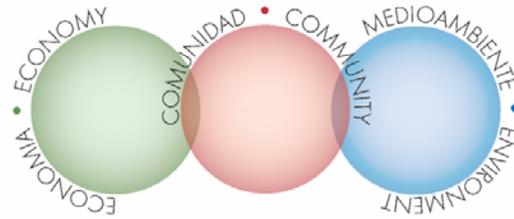


Cooperation across the California - Baja California Border

Where do we go from here?



July 16, 2004



2004 SANDAG BINATIONAL CONFERENCE CROSSBORDER COLLABORATION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

I. INTRODUCTION

The tenth anniversary of the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was recently commemorated. The NAFTA framework inspired a significant upsurge in cross-border collaboration in the various transfrontier metropolitan areas along the U.S.-Mexico border. It provided new opportunities to strengthen already existing economic, social, cultural, and political networks and linkages. Cross-border collaboration between local governments, civil society, and the private sector in the San Diego-Baja California region has flourished over the years as the cities that constitute this binational border region have tried to tackle various issues common to both. Even in the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001 we have sought solutions as a region.

At SANDAG's 8th Annual Binational Summer Conference, stakeholders from the United States and Mexico, including elected officials, the business sector, academia, non-governmental organizations, and community groups will be taking stock of what has been accomplished in the region in terms of crossborder collaboration, examining which mechanisms have worked and which have not, and making recommendations on ways we can improve the effectiveness of crossborder collaboration.

The objective of this paper is to stimulate and enrich the discussion by providing a brief overview of the status of crossborder collaboration in the Californias and the role that SANDAG's Borders Planning Program has played in that process. First, it briefly provides a general overview (not comprehensive) of the recent history of crossborder collaboration in this region within the context of U.S.-Mexican relations. Second, it describes the development of SANDAG's Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO), and its integration into an expanded Borders Planning Program, as an institutional mechanism for binational collaboration within a regional context. Third, it reviews the previous themes examined by the COBRO to assess what advances have been made in those areas addressed by the participants. Fourth, it summarizes the impacts that the conferences have had. It highlights key issues that continue to be raised as a point of departure for this year's conference. A revised version of this paper will include a summary of this year's conference to reflect and highlight the historical points that were of value to the participants.

II. CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION IN THE CALIFORNIAS IN THE CONTEXT OF U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

In 1989 a Bilateral Commission on the Future of United States-Mexican Relations identified some key long range shifts that would rejuvenate, and at the same time, complicate relations between the two countries. They argued, as a bilateral commission, that the shifting global economic context and the internal politics of our two nations would make us ever more interdependent. At the same

time they pointed to the fact that the bilateral agenda was becoming increasingly complex and that border issues would become increasingly important (Bilateral Commission, 1989; Guillén López y Ordoñez, 1995; Shirk, 1999; Domínguez and Fernández, 2001).

Despite cyclical shifts in U.S.-Mexican relations at a federal level, communities in the U.S.-Mexico border from the Californias to Texas and Tamaulipas have been dealing with everyday practical issues affecting the quality of their own region for many years. Outside of the realm of federal level protocol, this regional phenomenon was coined “citizenship diplomacy” to suggest that local governments and civic organizations took it upon themselves to initiate dialogue with their counterparts in the other country in order to build relationships and resolve common issues (Thorup, 1993).

Appleyard and Lynch, in their now famous report to the City of San Diego, *Temporary Paradise? A Look at the Special Landscape of the San Diego Region*, examined the region from a bioregional perspective without thought to the international border and drew the attention of city and regional officials to the critical connections between our two urbanized areas (Lynch and Appleyard, 1973). As a transfrontier metropolis, such as San Diego-Tijuana, grew in size and complexity the need arose to deal with issues of transborder planning (Herzog, 1990).

The crossborder dialogue in the Californias has grown and become increasingly more complex and sophisticated over these last few decades. Elected officials, planners, researchers, chambers of commerce, and civic organizations from Tijuana, Mexicali, Tecate, Rosarito, Imperial County, and the San Diego region have dealt with a myriad of issues as the economies have expanded, the population has grown, and pressure has been placed on the region’s natural assets and built infrastructure (Ganster, 2000).

At a binational community forum organized by the University of California, San Diego and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) in 1985 the question of the desirability and feasibility of a transborder planning agency for the San Diego-Tijuana region was discussed. The conference participants included public officials representing the local, state, and federal government of Mexico and the United States, researchers, journalists, community and regional planners, and interested citizens. The public officials argued that the political obstacles to creating such an entity were “insurmountable,” but the planners, researchers, and citizens disagreed. Some of them contended that the issue was a lack of will and resources to face the impending issues of urban growth in a binational region. The overall conclusion was that informal arrangements, for the time being, seemed to be more effective and efficient (Herzog, 1986).

Transborder land-use planning, although not widely accepted at that time, was defined by then Director of Urban and Environmental Studies at COLEF, Carlos Graizbord:

“In its proper conceptualization, transborder land-use planning clarifies our understanding of international problems and conflicts such as pollution, suboptimal use of natural resources, inefficient land-use allocation, and duplication of services.”

From then on the landscape of crossborder dialogue in the San Diego-Baja California region grew more diverse and more complex. One of the conclusions of the 1985 conference was the likelihood that crossborder dialogue among the business sectors might be less contentious and more productive than ones focused on land use or the water. At that time The San Diego Chamber of

Commerce and Tijuana's Chamber of Commerce (Camara Nacional de Comercio en Tijuana, CANACO) initiated discussions. Over the years they have developed a strong connection. Today the San Diego Chamber of Commerce has a Mexico Business Center and is an active member of COBRO. In 1997 San Diego Dialogue initiated its luncheon series, Forum Fronterizo, in which civic and business leaders in the San Diego-Tijuana region could discuss a variety of issues of concern for the mutual prosperity of the binational region.¹ The 1990s saw an expansion of crossborder conferences and community forums in a variety of sectors including health, economy, infrastructure, environment, water, and energy, in each case attempting to examine common issues and develop mutually beneficial strategies (Ganster and Sánchez, 1999; Spalding, 1999; Clough-Riquelme and Bringas, forthcoming).

III. THE COBRO EXPERIENCE

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), recognizing the importance of better understanding binational border-related planning issues for achieving a quality of life in the region, established the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) in 1996. With an elected local official as chair and the consuls general of the United States in Tijuana and of Mexico in San Diego as honorary co-chairs, its membership included representatives from local government, academia, civil society, and the private sector. Its mission was to inform the SANDAG Board of Directors about both short and long-term binational related activities, issues, and actions; provide recommendations regarding binational border-related planning and development; and identify ways to assist and coordinate with existing efforts in the binational area.

For nearly a decade, COBRO has addressed complex border-related issues such as improvements to border transportation infrastructure, better crossborder communication, homeland security, and water and energy supply. Each year during its summer conference, border stakeholders have discussed major issues, devised strategies for addressing them, and have made recommendations to be pursued by the membership through their respective agencies and areas of influence.

COBRO has been so successful in demonstrating the importance of looking at interregional planning issues that SANDAG, in its recent reorganization, decided to dedicate one of its five policy subcommittees to interregional planning issues. The Borders Committee now advises SANDAG's Board of Directors on issues that mutually impact San Diego and its surrounding counties, native nations, and the Republic of Mexico. Through interregional partnerships, such as that created with authorities representing the communities of western Riverside County, elected officials are addressing short and long term planning issues through dialogue and coordinated strategies. Today, COBRO is SANDAG's key stakeholder working group which advises the Borders Committee on binational border-related issues for California-Baja California with the technical staff from the cities and municipal planning institutes, as well as representatives from chambers of commerce, university research centers, and non-governmental organizations from both San Diego and Baja California.

IV. SANDAG BINATIONAL SUMMER CONFERENCES

Since its founding in 1996 the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) has convened a binational summer conference to address a border-related planning issue of concern to its membership.

1997 – Water Supply

The first conference held in July of 1997 addressed the issue of water supply and the challenges facing the San Diego-Tijuana region. The committee identified this as an important resource that has far-reaching impacts both north and south of the border, particularly for the future of the region's economic vitality. San Diego and Imperial Counties and the municipalities in northern Baja California all depend upon water delivered from the Colorado River.

It was stated at that time that by 2010, approximately 3.3 million people will live in the San Diego County Water Authority service area and 2.15 million people will live in the Tijuana region. This is an estimated total population of about 5.45 million people, with an expected demand of approximately 848,000 acre-feet or 1.05 billion m³ of water. Compared to 1997 figures, this represents a 47 percent increase in population and a 24 percent increase in water demand.

A variety of factors affect water demand both north and south of the border, including population, migratory tendencies, the economy, precipitation rates, water leakage, household size, agricultural demand, and conservation efforts such as behavioral changes and permanent conservation measures (i.e. the installation of low-flow shower heads and ultra-low-flush toilets). Likely options for assuring long term water reliability in this arid region include a mix of increased conservation, maximization of local supplies, water recycling, and desalination.

One of the main recommendations of the conference was the importance of adopting a watershed approach as an overriding principle for any planning strategy. San Diego and Tijuana share the Tijuana River Watershed that impacts water and waste water management issues for both. The participants recommended establishing a binational convening forum to facilitate regular transborder communication and cooperation regarding political, technical, and water management related issues. The forum should consist of federal, state, and local agencies from both nations, which are responsible for water supply.

It was proposed that this binational forum would:

- Facilitate information and technology exchanges in various sub-areas,
- Promote and assure an open public participation process on both sides of the border regarding the development of water supply infrastructure projects in the binational region.
- Explore the potential of joint participation in conveying water from the Colorado River to both Tijuana and San Diego.
- Examine opportunities for binational storage projects at a regional level, such as joint reservoirs.

The participants also recommended pursuing the following initiatives:

- *Promote all water as a commodity.* Agree upon a tiered set of water quality standards based on various uses (e.g. landscaping, agriculture, industrial uses, human consumption, etc.) for treated water. Subsequently, develop a commodity exchange program of credits and debits for wastewater and potable water to encourage water exchange and re-use between the two nations at a regional level.
- *Develop incentives and educational tools to motivate the general public and promote water conservation.* Conduct conservation projects including drought-tolerant landscaping and water-saving plumbing projects, as well as projects that minimize water loss through the distribution network.
- *Develop contingency plans to provide water from San Diego to Tijuana and from Tijuana to San Diego in case of emergencies.* Promote the sharing of information on both sides of the border, and the possibility of using infrastructure for mutual support in emergency situations.

Recommendations from COBRO's first annual conference in 1997 resulted in the formation of the Border Water Council for San Diego region and Baja California. The structure of the Border Water Council was the first of its kind that included active participation from federal, state, and local water entities from both sides of the border (Dominguez and Fernández de Castro, 2001: 143). The consuls general, through the Border Liaison Mechanism, provided a structure where the U.S. State Department and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign affairs facilitated direct contact of local, state, and federal agencies from both sides of the border to discuss common topics related to water.

In 1999 the San Diego County Water Authority (Water Authority) and Mexico agreed to study the feasibility of alternatives for water conveyance from the Colorado River to the San Diego-Tijuana-Tecate region. The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) signed Minute 301, a binational agreement between the two countries, outlining the terms and conditions by which the study will be undertaken. In 2002 San Diego and Tijuana collaborated on a feasibility study for a shared infrastructure which would bring Colorado River water from the Imperial and Mexicali Valleys to urbanized San Diego and Tijuana (Water Authority 2003). Negotiations continue with regard to the various options available for a conveyance system. It is hoped that a mutually beneficial and environmentally sound option will prevail. As seawater desalinization is becoming more and more cost effective, the Water Authority and the Water Commission of Baja California (Comisión Estatal del Agua) and the Tijuana water operator (Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos de Tijuana, CESPT) are pursuing possible joint projects.

1998 – Population Growth

COBRO identified population growth and its effect on education and the economy as an issue for its Second Annual Binational Conference. As the strength of a nation's economy is related to population growth rates, educational levels, and its ability to create new high-technology products, a society's ability to compete in these new knowledge-based industries and markets will be based upon the development of a workforce capable of mastering not only traditional skills like reading, writing, and mathematics, but also skills that foster the means to discover and apply knowledge.

The conference highlighted the growing interdependence of our two economies which have been integrating progressively over the last few decades. Our regional economy is affected by the global economy. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has allowed California's trade with Mexico to exceed \$20 billion yearly and has overcome obstacles such as fluctuations in the peso-dollar relationship as well as differences in economic indicators which, in the past, posed major obstacles to a more stable economic relationship.

It was recognized that if we take advantage of our geographic location and our shared resources, this region has great potential to succeed in highly competitive global markets. In this context, the maquiladora industry has been an important factor for development of the binational market. Employment in the maquiladora has helped fuel the steady growth of private sector jobs within the binational region, accounting for as much as 70 percent of Baja California's new jobs. The maquiladora industry, however, is under competitive pressure from other production centers such as China, where the cost of labor is comparatively cheaper.

As the binational economy rapidly evolves from one requiring basic manufacturing skills into one dependent upon a competent, technical labor force, the importance of adequate educational institutions emerges. It is critical that the San Diego-Baja California region collaborates on strategies to maintain a competitive workforce through appropriate training and educational opportunities for the region's residents. As San Diego has a relatively aging population and Tijuana has a relatively young population, there are synergies emerging with reference to the availability of a local labor force. Indeed, Tijuana has higher educational levels, both relative to the rest of Mexico and in real terms.

The conference highlighted the growing interdependence of our two economies over previous decades. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), implemented in 1994, enabled California's trade with Mexico to expand significantly. NAFTA also created a context that helped overcome traditional trade barriers between the two countries. If we take advantage of our geographic location and our shared resources, the San Diego-Tijuana region has great potential to succeed in highly competitive global markets. In this context, the maquiladora industry has been an important factor for development of the binational economy. Employment in the maquiladora has helped fuel the steady growth of private sector jobs within the binational region, accounting for as much as 70 percent of Baja California's new jobs. The maquiladora industry, however, is under competitive pressure from other production centers such as China, where the cost of labor is comparatively cheaper.

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The conference participants acknowledged the interdependence of issues of population growth, educational attainment levels, and economic prosperity. Recommendations focused on the improvement of communication between the educational systems in San Diego and Baja California through the establishment of a Border Education and Culture Council within the Border Liaison

Mechanism. The participants emphasized the importance of reducing red tape and creating a more direct dialogue among the educational agencies. They also encouraged more interaction within the business sector. Finally, it was recommended that a specific assessment be made of the border infrastructure needs to increase regional competitiveness.

The San Diego-Tijuana region is increasingly gaining a reputation for having a highly educated and innovative workforce. Tijuana, in recent years has both attracted highly skilled workers from other parts of Mexico, as well as dedicated itself to training existing human resources. Several prestigious universities now have their headquarters in Tijuana and Ensenada and are involved in a variety of collaborative studies with their U.S. counterparts. For example, the new Director of the University of California's UCMEXUS that coordinates the system's engagement with Mexican universities is the former Director of Urban and Environmental Studies of the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF). The Universidad Iberoamericana in Tijuana has for the last several years been partnering with the School of Education at California State University San Marcos in a teacher exchange program called Border Pedagogy. The County Department of Education has been collaborating for several years on a program dedicated to migrant education, as well as a collaborative with the Mexican federal government to offer distance learning through community technology centers. The San Diego Community College District sponsored the creation of the CAL-MEX-NET to exchange information and training opportunities for professionals in the areas of education and business development between San Diego and Mexico.

1999 – Energy, Transportation, and Trade

The San Diego-Tijuana region has the potential for being one of the foremost trade centers in the Western Hemisphere, but not without the appropriate infrastructure to support it. As has been pointed out by energy experts in the region, this binational region is an "energy island," as San Diego and Baja California import almost all of their energy due to lack of energy generating resources in the region (SANDAG, 1999; Sweedler 1999).

The Third annual conference focused on the relationship among energy, transportation infrastructure, and increasing economic prosperity through trade. Recent changes in both the energy sectors in the United States and Mexico have created new opportunities to create binational partnerships. The changes in the energy sector are altering the way energy is produced, transmitted, and distributed and is impacting the U.S.-Mexico border region significantly. In particular, Baja California is part of the North American grid, not the national grid in Mexico because of its geography. This has profound implications in terms of possible crossborder cooperation to ensure energy security in this binational region. As the largest energy user, transportation will be directly affected by the direction taken to increase the supply of energy in the region.

Developing crossborder energy-related infrastructure will be essential for the economic prosperity and quality of life for the region's inhabitants. Demand for power is expected to grow by 6 to 7 percent per annum for the next ten years in Baja California, while the demand for natural gas is expected to increase almost 9 percent over the next ten years in Mexico. In San Diego energy demand is expected to grow 3 percent annually (SANDAG 1999).

A binational regional strategy would focus on taking advantage of the new regulatory changes in both the United States and Mexico, creating an environmentally sound cross-border energy infrastructure, establishing administrative mechanisms to facilitate crossborder collaboration, and diversifying the energy portfolio of both San Diego and Baja California with an emphasis on increasing the use of renewable energy sources.

With these ideas in mind, the conference participants recommended that: 1) border infrastructure needs be prioritized; 2) a border energy issues group be formed; 3) border infrastructure needs and financing issues be included in SANDAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); and 4) state and federal financing options should be pursued.

As a result of the summer conference on binational energy, transportation, and trade, the Border Energy Issues Group (BEIG) was formed. The Co-Chairs of the BEIG are currently the Chair of the Borders Committee, and the Consul General of Mexico in San Diego. One of the main goals of the BEIG is to focus on binational cooperation and planning to ensure that the region's energy supply needs are met in an environmentally sound manner, and to achieve consensus on important binational energy issues and opportunities. The group is currently working on the issue of developing standardized criteria for the siting of energy facilities, supporting the pursuit of strategies that include renewable energy resources, and promoting programs and policies that encourage energy conservation. The BEIG is a working group of the Borders Committee. The San Diego Regional Energy Strategy developed by the San Diego Regional Energy Office includes a binational component.

2000 – Effective Communication

The goal of the Fourth Annual Binational Conference was to continue the positive feedback generated by the past conferences and to discover new methods of cross-border communication and collaboration. The focus of conference was on two aspects of communication – technology and human relations.

It was noted during the conference that the expansion of organizations in the border region have made relationships much more complex and diverse. It is possible to analyze these interactions on three levels from the most informal to the most integrated: convergence; collaboration; and joint planning. According to the results of a study presented at the conference organizations in San Diego operate, in general, at the level of joint planning. Organizations in the environmental sector in Tijuana operate at the collaborative level. However, the majority of the transborder relationships were at the level of either collaboration or convergence. It was suggested that the construction of networks and cooperation can be conceptualized as a collective search for a common territory and opportunities for mutual benefit (SANDAG, 2000).

The conference highlighted various mechanisms for using information technology to facilitate more fluid transborder communication. One of these examples was the successful implementation of the BECCnet, an e-mail discussion group hosted by the University of Arizona Udall Center. Set up as a listserv before the establishment of the BECC, the interested stakeholders numbering at least 470 had substantive impact on the establishment of the processes and procedures for BECC. It, in effect, provided a framework for these discussions by reducing space and time barriers. The BECCnet is a

clear example of border citizenship within the context of NAFTA and the importance of combining social organization with technology (SANDAG, 2000).

The internet has been a critical facilitator for communication and maintaining interested stakeholders up to date on developments in their field. Three examples relevant to the San Diego-Tijuana region and the U.S.-Mexican border were the Border Ecoweb, Borderbase, and ACCESS Mexico. The Border Ecoweb, begun in 1997 through a cooperative agreement between San Diego State University and the U.S. EPA, is a clearinghouse that facilitates public access to environmental information about the U.S.-Mexican border that is already on the Internet. The site was designed based on a user survey to ensure that it would meet the needs of border environmental stakeholders. Borderbase is a bilingual directory of organizations, agencies, and institutions that conduct work along the California-Baja California border. As compared to other websites that focus on the entire U.S.- Mexican border, this is a regional resource facilitated by SANDAG and covers a broad area of transborder activities. ACCESS Mexico is a borderwide initiative of the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce. The main purpose of the website is to organize the federal, state, and municipal environmental laws of Mexico in order to make the appropriate information available to American companies.

No matter how effective technology is in facilitating communication, social networks and organization must exist for collaboration to happen. Three cases of transborder collaboration at were highlighted. The first, focusing on social issues, was the San Diego-Tijuana Border Initiative. This is a binational coalition of government, business, academia, and grassroots organizations seeking to improve the quality of life of the region by empowering the stakeholders and developing policies for social issues of equal importance to both sides. The second initiative, called the Border Health Initiative, is sponsored by Project Concern International and centers on crossborder health issues such as Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse.. Finally, a unique example of a borderwide consortium with its headquarters located in San Diego is the Southwestern Center for Environmental Research and Policy (SCERP). SCERP is the result of a congressional initiative to fund applied environmental research through universities located along the length of the border. Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S.EPA, the consortium of ten U.S. and Mexican universities organizes research, outreach, and training programs devoted to improving environmental conditions and building capacity in the border region for resolving critical environmental problems.

The conference recommendations were to (1) expand scope of the BorderBase; (2) improve communications and cultural understanding between the Californias, and (3) promote the use of technology for enhanced transborder communication.

2001 – Border Wait Times

A significant number of people cross the border on a daily basis to: work, shop, go to school, or visit family and friends (San Diego Dialogue, 1994; Verduzco, Bringas y Valenzuela, 1995). Similarly, millions of dollars worth of trade goods pass through our ports of entry facilities in the San Diego-Baja California region each year. However, the wait times for both passenger and commercial vehicles have increased, raising costs of international trade and impacting the lives of individuals from California and Baja California who cross the border. COBRO, therefore, decided to focus its

Fifth Annual Binational Conference on border wait times and their implications for the regional economy.

It was found by looking at U.S. Customs statistics on northbound vehicles that although the overall number using the region's land port of entry infrastructure had increased over the last twenty years (even before NAFTA), the total amount of northbound traffic in the San Diego-Tijuana region was no greater in 2001 than when it peaked in 1994. Given that the general perception at the time was that wait times had increased, the explanation had to be related to the function of the border facilities themselves.

The issues affecting the ports of entry were categorized into three general sets of problem areas: infrastructure, operations, and planning. Long term solutions should include improvements in all three areas. Appropriate infrastructure combined with sufficient staffing can ease border waits times. A coordinated approach to planning and operations at the port of entry facilities was also highlighted. It is also important that state and local agencies be included in the planning process to best address local needs and access local expertise.

The conference participants identified the need to coordinate regional action relevant to reducing border wait times and work with other agencies to build a local coalition to support improvements at the border. Consider potential local funding contributions, and explore the potential for local funding contributions for ports of entry management. They emphasized identifying short-term solutions, while working on long-term issues. The regional group would: promote staffing all gates at ports of entry; promote the collection of reliable data regarding border wait times; evaluate the potential involvement of NADB and BECC; add a "crossing the border" information section to the binational section of the SANDAG website; request the Board of Directors of SANDAG to promote improvements toward better wait times; and work with federal authorities to increase hours of operation.

The San Diego Alliance for Border Efficiency was recently formed and has taken the regional lead, working diligently on forming a regional consensus regarding ways to better balance inspections and expediting the flow of people and goods. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has convened two Ports Working Groups – one for cargo and one for vehicles – which meets monthly at the SANDAG offices. Stakeholders from various sectors with concerns about the efficient flow of goods and people across the international border meet with community representatives of DHS to receive updates on current projects and the status of the border waits.

To address issues raised in the conference and in light of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the SANDAG Board approved the Resolution 2002-15 (Nov. 16, 2001) urging Federal and State Governments to help mitigate the economic impacts on the border region resulting from incremented border wait times.

2002 – Border Infrastructure Needs and Financing

The Sixth Annual Binational Summer Conference was dedicated to analyzing current financing schemes for border infrastructure and developing strategies to improve crossborder collaboration. This topic was selected because of the growing concern about an infrastructure crisis in the U.S.-Mexico border region. The deficit in 2002 for water, wastewater, and solid waste projects was \$5.8

to \$10.4 billion, and an estimated \$20 billion would be needed to accommodate future growth on the U.S. side alone. The challenge is to find a new way to finance, plan, and cooperate to develop synergy in border infrastructure. Thus,

As identified in SANDAG's Regional Economic Prosperity Strategy, enhancing collaboration between the private sector and government agencies responsible for improving the region's access to domestic and international markets is key to our economic success. In order to be competitive in the global marketplace, San Diego and its neighboring counties and Mexico will need to approach access issues as a region.

Representatives from the financial sector discussed the current mechanisms for financing border infrastructure. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (TDA), for example, can provide the "front end" of project development with funding for feasibility studies, grants, and industrial activities. The TDA was involved in the Tijuana light rail project and is interested in participating in more border projects. The Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im), and the Overseas Investment Corporation (OPIC), the North American Development Bank (NADBank), and California Infrastructure Bank were also discussed as possible sources of support for border infrastructure. The NADBank has expanded its mandate to include industrial pretreatment, agricultural water use efficiency, clean energy, air quality, industrial waste and site remediation, industrial by-product use and recycling. Representatives of these financial institutions acknowledged the complexity of financing border infrastructure projects, but indicated that the institutions are developing mechanisms to facilitate this in the future. As a product of NAFTA, the NADBank is focused on providing the appropriate financing for improving environmental infrastructure in the border region.

Recommendations in this area included improving the greater region's sea port facilities to accommodate larger classes of cargo ships, developing stronger ties between the regional ports from Ensenada to Los Angeles, improving capacity of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern (SD&AE) eastward rail line, expanding air passenger and air cargo capacity in the region, and continuing to make improvements to our transportation infrastructure, especially along designated trade corridors. The conference participants encouraged the Borders Committee to recognize the necessity of addressing border infrastructure needs and financing in the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

It was also recognized that the physical infrastructure and administrative resources at existing border ports of entry are already strained. Anticipated increases in population growth and international trade will place even greater pressures on the existing infrastructure. Planning is underway with the federal General Services Administration (GSA) to improve the San Ysidro port of entry through reorganization strategies, including the re-use of the Virginia Avenue-El Chaparral gate. Similarly, plans are underway to modernize the Tecate port of entry and its related transportation infrastructure. New technologies and long-term strategies are also being evaluated to improve northbound and southbound truck access at the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay commercial port.

The suggested actions from the conference were approved by SANDAG's Board of Directors and were incorporated into various regional programs such as the Regional Transportation Plan (MOBILITY 2030)

2003 – Homeland Security

The tragic terrorist events of September 11, 2001, led our nation to re-examine national security both within and along our borders. The resulting decisions made in Washington, D.C., directly affect the people living in communities throughout the Southern California-northern Baja California region. While we support our nation's efforts to safeguard our borders, we must also ensure that in implementing such measures, the quality of life in the region is not significantly diminished.

San Diego's position as home to one of the busiest ports of entry in the world places us on the frontline of national security efforts. Likewise, our significant local defense industry places great responsibility upon this community for implementing those policies instrumental to safeguarding America. Thus, the Seventh Annual Binational Summer Conference was dedicated to examining homeland security issues and their potential impact on our region.

The framework for the newly consolidated Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to manage issues along the U.S.-Mexico border is prescribed in the Twenty Two-Point Smart Border Agreement between the U.S. and Mexico. This agreement calls for specific actions to ensure secure infrastructure, secure flows of people, and secure flows of goods. Many organizations in the region have supported implementation of the agreement, which calls for cross-border cooperation, harmonized port of entry operations, increased use of technology to allow legal crossers and commercial entities more streamlined access, and technology sharing, to name a few.

It has been firmly established that the majority of daily crossers in San Ysidro, Otay Mesa and Tecate ports of entry are frequent crossers, either for work, school, shopping, or to visit relatives and friends. Thus one way to enhance national security, while respecting the flow of people and goods, is to implement programs designed specifically for that population. The efficient use of technology for pre-screening and information collection is critical in light of limited resources at our border. According to the White House, "...extensive pre-screening of low-risk traffic [allows] limited assets to focus attention on high-risk traffic. The use of advanced technology to track the movement of cargo and the entry and exit of individuals is essential to the task of managing the movement of hundreds of millions of individuals, conveyances, and vehicles."² In this region, a number of programs are already in place to facilitate this movement. These programs include: SENTRI (Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection) for individual crossers; and BRASS (Border Release Advanced Screening and Selectivity) and FAST (Free and Secure Trade) for commercial activity.

A survey of U.S. and Mexican organizations with significant border-related business specifically conducted for the conference revealed that those polled were frustrated by longer border wait times, but that this was on the rise even before 9/11. The survey respondents felt that the level of coordination between government, businesses, non-profits, and other organizations was slightly higher after 9/11. For the most part, respondents felt that working together should involve local initiatives in the Californias, funded by the federal governments. Obstacles to such collaboration cited included: technology and funding gaps; differing policy priorities; issues of culture, attitude, and trust; and hesitancy on the part of the two federal governments to entrust more collaboration to local governments (SANDAG, 2003).

Based on the ideas and information exchanged at the conference, the participants made the following recommendations. First, participants, through their various organizational affiliations would promote the San Diego border region to the appropriate authorities, as the ideal "test-bed"

for new homeland security technology along the U.S. southwestern border. Second, participants would request periodic written reports from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on technology related implementations and other security issues. Third, it was suggested that COBRO should identify gaps in binational planning efforts by coordinating resources among stakeholders to create a database of information for the region. Finally, COBRO requested that the Consul General of Mexico, in his capacity as an advisory liaison to the Board of Directors, promote the conference recommendations to the appropriate authorities in Mexico.

After the conference, binational stakeholders formed the San Diego Alliance for Border Efficiency which has taken the lead in advocating the position of the region to the appropriate authorities in Washington. For example, in the case of the development of the US VISIT program, the Alliance for Border Efficiency has been able to communicate directly with Secretary Ridge, has and has promoted members of COBRO attending various town hall meetings and other outreach events of the DHS to ensure that the region's concerns are voiced. Regional organizations have mobilized to make sure that federal security programs such as the US VISIT do not adversely impact our economy by stalling the flow of people and goods across our international border.

As a result of the conference, SANDAG incorporated the issue of homeland security in the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) as one of the key issues relevant to the San Diego borders

V. IMPACT OF COBRO RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are some highlights of how the actions recommended by COBRO through these years have been incorporated into SANDAG's programs and activities.

Binational Initiatives

As a result of recommendations from binational summer conferences, a number of regional initiatives have emerged. Some of these have been facilitated by SANDAG and others have been facilitated by other members of COBRO, such as the Water Authority. Some have been created within the Border Liaison Mechanism. The San Diego Alliance for Border Efficiency has coordinated local stakeholder efforts to present the concerns of the region regarding federal programs that may affect the movement of goods and people across the border. The Alliance has orchestrated letter-writing campaigns, visited Washington, D.C, and represented stakeholders in outreach events held by the DHS. It continues to be a driving force as a watchdog for federal programs.

The Border Energy Issues Group has the potential to be an innovator for binational energy strategies. It is currently examining the binational regional energy situation and exploring ways of creating a set of regulations pertinent to binational energy planning. It is encouraging energy efficiency programs and the development of renewable energy technology. Most importantly, the BEIG is exploring the best mechanism for coordinating the three levels of government in a binational context to encourage a regional energy strategy that accounts for both the United States and Mexico.

Reports/Studies

Since the first conference organized by COBRO in 1997 on binational water supply, the binational summer conferences have identified information gaps that have required further study. Several major studies have originated from the recommendations made by conference participants.

In 2002 the Water Authority completed a binational feasibility study on the various alignment possibilities for a joint conveyance infrastructure which would carry Colorado River water from the Imperial and Mexicali Valleys to the San Diego-Tijuana region. This study was one of the recommendations from the Border Water Council that was formed as a result of the first summer conference. The BWC was later recognized by the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) as the regional working group and culminated with the signing of Minute 301.

In 2000 SANDAG published the Jacumba-Jacumé Study that investigated the feasibility of opening an international port of entry at Jacumba, where Interstate 8 is closest to the border in eastern San Diego County. On the Baja California side of the border, Jacume is 6 miles (10 km) north of Federal Highway 2, both the older "free" road and the recently opened "toll" road. The study examined the potential use for such a border entry by commercial and passenger vehicles needing easy access to the two major highways. The study recommended continued monitoring of the area for the potential development of a Port of Entry.

The San Diego Region-Baja California Cross-Border Transportation Study published in 2000 resulted in the development of a Cross Border Travel Forecasting Model that assists local, state, and federal agencies on both sides of the border to plan highway, major roads, and other transportation infrastructure.

Finally, a study was designed to assess cross-border shipping patterns among the key private sector stakeholders in binational commerce: maquiladoras (assembly only); maquiladoras (manufacturers); customs brokers; non-agricultural shippers (definitive importers); agricultural shippers (produce importers/exporters); and transportation companies. The "Survey and Analysis of Trade and Goods Movement between California and Baja California, Mexico" was completed in 2003.

Tools/Resources

A number of useful tools and resources have been produced throughout the existence of COBRO. Some have been produced by SANDAG as a result of conference recommendations, while others have been created through collaborations among various member agencies of COBRO.

The Borderbase.org is a SANDAG product intended to serve the border planning network in the Californias. There are plans to expand its use and revitalize the advisory council to make it more responsive to community needs.

SANDAG recently updated the San Diego-Tijuana Interactive Atlas. This is an interactive webpage in the GIS section of the SANDAG website. It contains data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses from both the United States and Mexico. Through a rigorous process the variables for each census have been calculated to be comparable. The user can identify the census data of interest and get a map indicating the data for the entire San Diego-Tijuana region.

In a collaborative project between planning agencies from the San Diego region and Baja California, SANDAG created a land use map to show the comparable land uses on both sides of the border. This was complemented by a spatial photo on the opposite side of the poster version of the map that shows the urban footprints of cities in the region including the urban areas of the southern portion of San Diego region and the cities of Tijuana, Playas de Rosarito and Tecate.

Finally, SANDAG and various members of COBRO are working with the Regional Workbench Consortium (RWBC). The RWBC is a collaborative network of university and community partners dedicated to enabling sustainable city-region development. The RWBC promotes multidisciplinary research and service learning aimed at understanding how problems of environment and development interrelate across local, regional and global scales. Taking a forward-looking perspective, the RWBC focuses on the Southern California-northern Baja California transborder region—especially the San Diego-Tijuana-Tecate-Playas de Rosarito city-region and coastal zone. The RWBC's 3D imaging tools and slider technology for looking at shifting land use was critical to the input process of the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) as citizens examined the land use changes over time in the region.

Policy Impacts

Local stakeholders have played a critical role in the development and implementation of federal programs such as the SENTRI pass (Secure Electronic Network for Traveler's Rapid Inspection) which enables prescreened passenger vehicles to cross the border in dedicated lanes to facilitate crossborder business and personal travel. Local advocacy by the member agencies of COBRO ensured not only the implementation of this federal program, but its adoption in the California-Baja California border. San Diego Dialogue at UCSD's Extension Program, an active member of COBRO, conducted a survey of border crossers in 1994. The findings of this study showed that 90 percent of the daily traffic across the San Ysidro Port of Entry was commuter related. Business and trade in the region was significantly improved by the possibility of border commuters being registered in the SENTRI program. This federal program was so successful that technologies used in programs like the SENTRI has been extended to cargo lanes and more recently was approved for pedestrians.

Member agencies of COBRO have been working diligently on supporting various border infrastructure projects including the Otay Mesa southbound truck lane, a cross border terminal, the 905 Freeway project, and provision of railway service to the east. The member agencies of COBRO have been promoting a united voice for all of these improvements to state and federal legislatures and have come a long way in terms of coordinating their message and strategies. In the final analysis, if the region has clearly established its priorities, it is more likely to bring in investments to implement those projects.

The San Diego region is currently drafting the final version of the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) in which binational issues have been integrated through the Borders Chapter. The Borders Committee is working with officials from Orange, Riverside, and Imperial Counties, as well as tribal governments and authorities from Baja California to collaborate on policies and strategies to improve jobs/housing accessibility, transportation, energy and water supply, environment, economic development, and homeland security. The issues raised and strategies suggested throughout the years in the Binational Summer Conferences have served as a basis for the binational perspective of the Borders Chapter of the RCP.

VI. DISCUSSION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED BORDER COLLABORATION

“. . . there is one aspect of the relationship between the two countries that nobody in either can change. That is geography....As we demystify the Mexico-United States border, we prepare to live in a world enriched by the pragmatism and inventiveness of people in borderlands.”³

There have been a series of recurring themes which apply to all of the planning issues raised during the binational summer conferences which should be examined. First, is the issue of crossborder coordination. What have we learned about liaison mechanisms with the projects that have been undertaken so far? What can be done to improve coordination efforts? Second is the need for more effective information exchange and data sharing. What can we do to harmonize methodologies so we can better understand the region as a whole? Third is the need for consolidating regional leadership to provide a united voice to centers of decision-making outside the region. Finally, is the issue of the complexity of financing mechanisms for the border region. What can be done to modify those mechanisms to meet our regional needs?

For more than eight years, COBRO has played an import role in facilitating transborder dialogue and cooperation on a number of areas. SANDAG has an even longer record of effective collaboration with agencies in Baja California. As our two regions become increasingly interdependent through economic integration, population trends, and urbanization, the need for more effective crossborder collaboration is needed to address the growing challenges and to take advantages of the many opportunities. Participants in the annual COBRO summer conference have the opportunity to help define crossborder cooperation for the future.

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¹ For a full listing of issue papers prepared for the *Forum Fronterizo* see their website: <http://www.sandiegodialogue.org>

² White House. *Securing America's Borders Fact Sheet: Border Security*. www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/01.html

³ Bustamante, Jorge A. (1992), "Demystifying the United States-Mexico Border," *The Journal of American History*. Sept: pg. 490.