Laredo
TEXAS
Federal Legislative Agenda

Adopted by City Council
January 19, 2016

114th Congressional Session
2016 Federal Legislative Agenda

Environmental
Continued Funding for Environmental Outreach Education Programs
Energy Efficiency and Alternative Energy

Health
Chronic Disease Prevention (Obesity and Diabetes)
Fund Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs
Laboratory Response Network Certification
US/Mexico Border Region Federal Designation for Public Health Border Security

Homeland Security
Asset Forfeiture Program
COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) Program
Domestic Violence Prevention
Drug Treatment and Addiction Rehabilitation
Emergency Operations Center
Funding for Body-Worn Cameras
Operation Stone Garden Funding
Threat vs. Population Based Funding Formulas
Weather Satellite Imaging Equipment (Radar)

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Preserving Laredo’s Propriety and Regulatory Rights in Dealing with Communication Providers and Expand Universal Fund Support for Broadband
Rio Grande Basin – Chacon Creek - Funding
Support for the Section 206 Ecosystem Restoration Projects

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Funding Support for New Maintenance and Operations Facility
Hachar Parkway
Implement Capital Program to Replace Aging Transit Fleet
Improve State Loop 20 to Interstate Standards
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Railway Operational Improvement
Riverside Boulevard Development
Support and Status of the Renovation and Modernization of the Bridge I, Convent Avenue Port of Entry (Gateway to the America Bridge)
Widen FM 1472 “Mines Road”
Widen I-35
Environmental
Continued Funding for Environmental Outreach Education Programs

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo is aggressively expanding its scope of services in the community. One way to address the rampant litter and tire problems in the community, as well as reduce non-point source pollution is by educating the citizens of Laredo, with an emphasis on our youth, on the effects of litter and used tires, and the desperate need to foster stewardship.

Background
In a massive effort to imprint good environmental habits to a population that is many times overlooked, the City of Laredo has initiated an extensive environmental education campaign, aimed at the youth in our community, with emphasis on water quality protection.

Through a U.S./Mexico Border grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Environmental Services Department continues to work on an initiative for all early childhood education in Laredo Texas, as well as Laredo’s sister city across the river - Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The Los Dos Laredo’s Environmental Pre-School up to second grade Education Project is the production of new environmental education material and gathering other pre-existing and available materials, and presenting the material by conducting several workshops on both sides of the Rio Grande, including all private and government funded day care provider entities and independent school districts. The goals of the projects are; 1) bring awareness of non-point source pollution and its effects on our water quality, 2) to provide early grade level school educators with free environmental education materials (includes a bilingual musical story book, describing the water cycle, littering control, and water quality pollution prevention activities) and downloadable web sites, 3) to form a bridge of communication and cooperation between environmental professionals and early grade level educators.

Another EPA Border 2012 (now Border 2020) Grant funded joint venture project called ” Los Dos Laredo’s Watershed Monitoring, Education, and Litter Cleanup Project” between the City of Laredo’s Environmental Services Department, the Texas Watch Organization, Nvo. Laredo Mexico’s Sub-Secretaria de Ecologia, Keep Laredo Beautiful Nonprofit Organization, and a number of high school level teachers and student volunteers from both local school districts will receive watershed education and monitoring training, and they in-turn will be training the educators and their participating students; so that they can conduct the watershed surveying and monitoring. Volunteers will be participating in clean up campaigns within their respective and previously determined city watershed monitoring point stations. Based on the enthusiastic response, promises, and pledge made by all participating parties, these two projects promise to be very successful.

The Department also completed a Border 2012 grant by creating an animated Non-Point Source Pollution Prevention video. This video is the second phase of successful Storm water Adventures of Inspector McCloud Musical Storybook, a 30 minute animated video, which includes the same pollution creating and pollution fighting characters; thus, helping us re-enforce our water quality pollution prevention message for our Los Dos Laredo’s children. Both border sister cities agreed that if we were ever going to make a significant and sustainable change in our citizen’s behavior
and attitude, we had to continue our efforts in influencing our children’s fresh minds at an early age.

Solution
Grant funds and other federal assistance will enable the Environmental Services Department to continue the environmental education program for an environmentally sustainable community. Re-establishing and funding the Environmental Justice grants, and increasing funding for Border 2020 grants.

Target Agencies
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Justice and Border 2020

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Energy Efficiency and Alternative Energy

Situation Assessment
With growing energy needs and growing energy prices, the City of Laredo is focusing on developing energy efficiency programs that will help the City as well as our citizens and businesses find innovative ways to conserve energy as well as increase energy efficiency. The City of Laredo, which is a formula-eligible local government, has, through the support of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program, implemented a well-rounded energy program that utilizes alternative energy projects and energy efficiency programs to create jobs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve greater energy efficiency. The City’s effort was published at the U.S. Mayor Newspaper (November 7, 2011, VOL. 78, ISSUE 17) as the best practice. This project created new green job, reduced the greenhouse gas emissions, provided energy efficiency and conservation.

Background
The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 appropriated $3.2 billion for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program to assists local and state governments to develop and implement a comprehensive energy efficiency strategy which emphasizes a bottom-up, community-based approach in helping the nation meet its energy and climate protection goals. Under the EECBG program the City of Laredo received $2.1 million in funding. The Environmental Services Department has developed a general plan for distribution/use of these funds in the following categories: Planning/Administration, Retrofit/Rehab Projects like upgrading downtown street lights with LED lights, upgrade of the HVAC system for the Health department, Energy Efficiency revolving loan fund (RLF) for the citizens, and Alternative Energy Projects like installation of the solar array system in two buildings, purchase of solar trash cans for the downtown business districts.

Several years ago, the City of Laredo took the lead in developing alternative fuel options by building a Compressed Natural Gas or CNG fueling station to service the City’s transit busses. Just recently, thanks to two Texas State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) grants, the facility was upgraded to handle not only the buses, but also, purchase 10 vehicles to add to the growing fleet of CNG vehicles (57+ and growing). These conversions will save the City over $120,000 in fuel savings per year. Additionally, a pump was added for the general public so that individuals or companies driving CNG vehicles in Laredo can fuel up at that station at a cost significantly lower than gas or even diesel vehicles. With the abundance of natural gas in the Laredo area, this is one project that officials hope the community embraces, as well.

Additionally, the City has implemented a 38.6 kW solar array and 2.4 kW wind turbine at the Environmental Services Department as a project for other City facilities and as a showcase project for local residents and businesses. Another cutting-edge project the City is working on is extracting methane from the City’s Landfill for reuse or power generation as well as a sludge to energy project at the City’s South Laredo Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Developing projects and opportunities to go green, save energy costs, reduce energy used and have a positive impact on the environment by protecting natural resources is a priority for the City of Laredo. Future projects includes reducing carbon footprint form City buildings by saving
taxpayers’ money, taxpayers and citizens will also find ways to save a little green by going green in very real ways.

Solution
The City of Laredo would respectfully requests to reauthorize funding of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. Moreover, the City is interested in any other grants/loans for alternative energy/waste-energy projects.

Target Agency
Department of Energy

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Health
Chronic Disease Prevention
(Obesity and Diabetes)

Situation Assessment
Reduction of risks for chronic diseases especially obesity, diabetes, hypertension, renal disease and cancer through early detection, preventive care and integrated disease self management (DSM) coupled by community disease self management is critically important to reduce and prevent the current epidemic in the United States. This is especially important to address the most vulnerable and most at risk –persons living along the US/Mexico Border. Early intervention is imperative i.e. - 1) allowing funds for prevention and wellness services and/or pilot projects on US/Mexico border in the Women, Infant and Children’s Program (WIC) and in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); 2) a SNAP policy change to only allow nutritious foods and health education for participants; 3) institutionalize the Bienestar (well being) curriculum as a public health/school health obesity reduction model along the US/Mexico Border; 4) reduce chronic disease risks through targeted high risk family focused DSM interventions; 5) integrate DSM along with mental health into primary care and 6) make healthier foods more affordable and accessible to high risk vulnerable populations.

Background
In Laredo (and other US/Mexico Border communities), obesity is an epidemic: 78.2% of males and 72.2% of females and 30% of primary school children are overweight; in Laredo we have a disproportion rate of Diabetes Mellitus (DM) (16% prevalence with 60 persons dying each year and 54% of deaths in women due to cardiovascular disease). More than 30% of pregnant women in Laredo have gestational diabetes and there is a 10% rise in hypertension and pregnancy in women under twenty-five (25) years of age. Furthermore, Mexican-American children in particular are at increased risk for developing adult onset diabetes. The National Center for Health Statistics reported that Mexican-American children are about twice as likely to be obese than other groups and the proportion of obese children in the 6-11 years of age group continues to increase since 1999. Finally the US/Mexico Border population is aging increasing the risk to develop unmanageable chronic diseases. The health care economic impact of these issues, emerging continued risk of malnutrition, inadequate access to affordable and accessible healthier foods, lack of exercise and lack of early access to care and screening is overwhelming.

Potential Solutions
1. Fund WIC Healthy Learning Center Pilots to address obesity through the implementation of a Bienestar Early Childhood curriculum, healthier eating and exercise.
2. Implement the NIH evidenced based Bienestar School Based Health Program in public schools.
3. Provide support for family focused and community oriented DSM to address diabetes, physical activity, smoking sensation, cholesterol and high blood pressure on the US/Mexico border using the Laredo Health Department Healthy Living/Viviendo Mejor Model.
4. Provide access to healthier and affordable foods and incentivize grocers and merchants that promote healthier foods especially those in high risk and poor neighborhoods.
5. Change the SNAP policy to only allow nutritious foods and mandate nutrition and wellness education upon entitlement similar to WIC.
6. Develop policy to integrate DSM into primary care along with mental health support
Progress
Discussed WIC pilot with past Undersecretaries for Food and Nutrition, funding through ACA is a start but not equitable for underserved communities especially those served through public health, SNAP policy change has been discussed but no agreement reached.

Target Agencies
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
United States Health and Human Services (Office of Global Affairs, Office of the Americas)
Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
National Institute of Health (NIH)
US Department of Education (school based programs)
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services

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Fund Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs

Situation Assessment
Laredo and other US/Mexico border communities face serious behavioral health, substance abuse and co-morbidity challenges that merit behavioral health screening, treatment and preventive care and as well rehabilitation. This is in addition to in-bed care. Infectious and chronic disease (especially diabetes) co-morbidities (HIV, STD, Cancer), women’s health disparities and insufficient access to health care, insufficient behavioral health care professionals and lack of facilities accentuate the problem.

Background
As our population ages, the level of wellness in the community and lack to care and to early and preventive care poses a challenge requiring more and integrated behavioral health services. In addition, counseling services, psychosocial assessment, and chronic disease prevention are needed. More teen pregnancies and teen challenges in schools to prevent suicide and bulling are other critical needs. Yet we are underserved for specialty providers and trained health support staff. On the United States/Mexico Border issues are compounded by socio-economic conditions and lack to early preventive and primary care as well limited behavioral health services. With the growing stress and substance abuse crisis among families and communities and the increase of co-morbidities (recreational and illegal drug use, Hepatitis B and C, HIV, Teen Age pregnancy, domestic violence and diabetes to mention a few) both acute and preventive behavioral health and substance abuse care is needed in the outpatient and institutional care setting.

Specific behavioral health and substance abuse screening and other services essential for Laredo and other US/Mexico border communities are: 1) Behavioral Health Care both preventive and treatment, 2) current adolescent health care especially for sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, HIV, violence and substance abuse, 3) women’s health and domestic violence but as well wellness especially against obesity and diabetes, 4) substance abuse especially for men and adolescents in particular with the current epidemic of Hepatitis B and C, HIV and violence. Finally, there are insufficient care facilities for both acute and long term care but more importantly preventive care and screening services that also need major support.

Solutions
1. Integrate and collocate behavioral health and substance abuse screening, counseling, treatment and prevention services into routine primary care services along with Disease Self Management (DSM) such as the Healthy Living/Viviendo Mejor model from Laredo.
2. Support pilot projects on the US/Mexico Border (Laredo) to fully integrate behavioral health and substance abuse services within public health and primary care wellness services (including using telemedicine).
3. Provide additional resources for prevention and outreach as well acute care treatment.
4. Provide additional support for youth prevention and intervention services.

Target Agencies
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
United States Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
US/Mexico Border Health Commission
National Institute of Health (NIH), National Institute on Drug Abuse

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Laboratory Response Network
Certification

Situation Assessment
Rapid laboratory detection along the United States/Mexico Border is paramount to homeland security. Early intervention, disease control, detection and prevention especially for health and bio-security make everyone safer. Currently, laboratory capacity is not adequate to detect all hazards, emerging, novel conditions and bioterrorism acts. Laredo, as the number one (1) inland port of entry and the third largest port for trade, commerce and international travel is a prime site for potential health and security threats. A biosafety laboratory level III (BSL III) exists in Laredo, but we need a Laboratory Response Network (LRN) certification by the State of Texas to respond to current, new and emerging highly infectious and biological threats. This certification will also facilitate Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) approval to reduce the risk of foodborne threats.

Background
The United States/Mexico Border is a target and we must assure both homeland and health security for safety and protection against all hazards, highly infectious diseases and bioterrorism. We are an international border and Laredo is the number one (1) inland port of entry with 40% of all US inland goods passing through Laredo’s four (4) international bridges, 16,000 trucks cross daily through one (1) international bridge. With new trade agreements (Mexico, Central America, South America, China and Europe), increased air travel and air cargo; trade and population is expected to grow another 10-15%. Laredo serves as a HUB for other rural and smaller counties further increasing growth (100,000 daily) and with our sister city of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico our MSA is over one million. These conditions promote daily health security and all hazardous threats by current, emerging and new diseases on the Texas/Mexico border. Some of these potential threats are new diseases; such as, Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), H1N1, Ebola, and other highly infectious diseases. We also have the continued threat of Dengue and West Nile Virus, Botulism, Ricin, Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis and now Chikungunya Virus. Anyone of these could pose a serious health threat and/or serve as a bioterrorist attack.

Potential Solutions
We are already a certified and permitted Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) BSL III lab (have been for five (5) years). The State of Texas through the Department of State Health Services has not approved the City of Laredo BSL III as an LRN due to funding. We feel strongly that our international border is one of the most at risk ports of entry and the BSL III would detect and confirm local, statewide and national threats. There is no better way to protect the state and nation’s homeland security than to have the best laboratory response capability and public health emergency response on the ground in the city that is now the third largest port of entry into the United States. Our BSL III plays a vital part in our public health emergency preparedness and response. The LRN benefits all of us.

Progress
Our 4,000 sq. ft. facility provides clinical, environmental and bio-safety lab III testing and detection. As an LRN, we can conduct additional biological testing for critical public health bio-
threats and for foodborne disease prevention. The City of Laredo invested $2,050,000 for renovation and $120,000 for equipment, DSHS contributed $750,000 for renovation and $300,000 for equipment but need for Texas to certify us a minimum of $300,000 per year for operations and personnel from federal agencies.

Target Agencies
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Office of the Secretary
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Texas Department of State Health Services
United States Food and Drug Administration
Department of Agriculture (USDA)
United States Health and Human Services (Office of Global Affairs, Office of the Americas)
National Institute of Health (NIH)

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Situation Assessment
Establish a Federal Designated US/Mexico Border Public Health Fund to address core public health services and public health emergency preparedness response. This is especially important since current funding for the region continues to be reduced or deleted for surveillance, core public health services, public health preparedness and response and chronic disease prevention. In particular the Public Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHS), Early Warning Disease Surveillance (EWIDS), Tuberculosis Control and HIV Prevention funds have been eliminated or greatly reduced. This affects the US/Mexico border’s public health and emerging disease control and prevention response to current, emerging and new highly infectious public health threats.

Background
Disease control, chronic disease prevention, surveillance and detection continue to play an important role for early detection, disease containment and prevention. This is especially true among communities with large health disparities. With the continued threat of infectious, foodborne (illegal food entry), vectorborne disease and emerging diseases early detection and surveillance is vitally important. Nowhere is the disparity more pronounced than on the US/Mexico Border. The H1N1 experience gave us an opportunity to assess our capabilities and we need to ensure the safety and well being of the entire country but the US/Mexico Border plays a critical role in containment before it spreads through the US. To meet these health care challenges both infrastructure and human resources are critically needed especially as we address health security on the US/Mexico Border. No longer can communities like Laredo provide routine public health services that state and/or federal partners should but cannot respond to (disease control and health security, infectious disease response, illegal food entry, testing and detection). Yet the increase of risk to international, regional and local exposure continues to rise. With the highest morbidity and mortality rates for tuberculosis in the state, the threat of new and emerging highly infectious diseases (Novel microbes, recurrent diseases, Ebola) and co-infections like diabetes, HIV, and substance abuse and behavioral health threatening the front door to the U.S, the US/Mexico border (binational and international bio-security threat) is a serious concern that warrants immediate and sustained public health services. Because disease does not respect borders, Public Health Emergency Response at the border is preparedness, response and health security for the nation.

Solution
Current, new and emerging public health challenges requires adequate surveillance, technical expertise for detection, treatment and testing such as through EWIDS, PHHS, Public Health Emergency Response and laboratory testing. Funding and resources should be based on need, contingency services and response not on population formulas, direct funding is urgently warranted and should be designated for the US/Mexico Border for:

Disease Control, Prevention and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Activities:

1. Maintain surveillance, detection, disease control and food safety/enforcement services and environmental health services that will be accomplished by appropriate staff (epidemiologist, sanitarians and senior laboratory). These persons will evaluate,
monitor, investigate, enforce, test and take preventive and disease control measures on communicable diseases (in particular Tuberculosis, HIV, vaccine preventable), all public health threats, zoonotic, vector borne (Chikungunya V) and food borne disease; as well as, other emerging and new highly infectious disease threats pose a health security threat.

2. Maintain Border Health security by enhancing US/Mexico border health security services and partnerships for epidemiology, surveillance, public health risk reduction, communication and testing especially as we face emerging, new and highly infectious disease threats along with other co-morbidities. Continue prevention and detection training (i.e. infectious disease, disease detection and chronic disease management) in collaboration and coordination with local and Binational partners. These public health emergency response activities will ensure rapid communications, interventions, mitigation and prevention of all hazardous threats.

Progress
Ongoing but resources remain limited especially for border health security.

Target Agencies
Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) -Centers for Children, Public Health Preparedness, Chronic Disease, Tuberculosis and HIV
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Office of Global Affairs, Office of the Americas
Office of Policy and Planning, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Division of International Health Security
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Department of Homeland Security
United States Food and Drug Administration

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 Homeland Security
Asset Forfeiture Program

Situation Assessment
The Department of Justice announced recently that it had put a hold on profits made by local law enforcement from its Civil Asset Forfeiture Program. While the move hamstrings local law enforcement agencies’ ability to buy new equipment, it will have no such effect on federal agencies, which are exempt. Under the program, law enforcement agencies can keep 75 percent of the property they seize from criminal activity, including cash, houses or vehicles. In Laredo, Texas Homeland Security begins with Hometown Security. By cutting Federal funding for asset forfeiture to local police departments, The Laredo Police Department may not be prepared to purchase new equipment and departmental essential needs to help protect our border city and our officers who are on the front lines.

Background
The Laredo Police Department asks for consideration for funding to its crucial role in protecting the largest inland port of the United States. Laredo, Texas shares a border with Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas Mexico which is comprised of 229 miles long of largely rural terrain. There are on average 10,000 commercial motor vehicles that cross our two nations daily. The Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas –Laredo, Texas corridor is one of the most sought out by those transnational drug organizations that breach our sovereign borders every day with narcotics. Diminishing the funding that the asset forfeiture funding, which provided our abilities to purchase and renew quickly outdating equipment and technology, could diminish our capabilities in the fight against transnational drug organizations.

Solution
The Laredo Police Department, along with other municipal police departments, have to bear the costs of increasing security challenges and the forfeiture funds help supplement the ability for the Departments to purchase resources and equipment need to help protect their communities.

Target Agency
U.S. Department of Justice

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COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) Program

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo, with an estimated daily population of 260,000, abuts the Rio Grande River and has four ports of entry. For Laredo, its proximity to the river, the four POE’s, International Rail Crossing, an International Airport and NAFTA commerce translate to it being the largest U.S. inland port. In 2015, the Laredo International Bride #1 is going to receive a $27 million dollar renovation due to the expanding need of the Border influx of visitors, tourists, and daily commuters heading in and out of the country.

As it exists today, the daily threats to the border enter the U.S. mixed in with legitimate northbound traffic and exits the U.S. mixed in with legitimate southbound traffic. Traffic going in either direction brings a distinct menace to our community, state and country. Northbound traffic’s major concerns include the element of human (to include terrorists) and illegal drug smuggling and trafficking. Southbound traffic’s major concerns include undeclared illicit drug proceeds, stolen vehicles, stolen property (to include weapons) and wanted persons seeking refuge in Mexico. Any illicit proceeds, stolen property, weapons, or absconders from prosecution managing to make their way south will eventually generate or fund crimes heading back north into the United States. An illicit act in one direction will reciprocate in some shape or form another illicit act in the opposite direction.

The nation’s current recessive economic situation has impacted every corner of life. Laredo is no exception. Laredo resides in one of the nation’s poorest counties; identified even before the economic downturn. This economic reality, coupled with the reality of Mexican drug cartel crime threats negatively affecting the U.S./Mexican border regions on both the Mexican side of the border directly, and the United States side of the border indirectly, has greatly impacted the City of Laredo Police Department’s ability to maintain a suitable staffing number of officers to meet its responsibilities for combating area crime effectively.

Background
The City of Laredo has made it a goal to enhance the quality of life in Laredo by providing optimum police services. In 1995, the City of Laredo received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to assist the Laredo Police Department implement the Community-Oriented Policing (COPS) concept. The Laredo Police Department hired six grant-funded police officers that piloted a community policing initiative in an identified high crime area with evident signs of social disorganization. After several months, community policing officers assigned to this area made such a positive impact that the Laredo Police Department (LPD) decided to adopt the COPS philosophy for citywide implementation.

Since that time, with the enabling assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice COPS funding, the City of Laredo gained 155 new police officers. In furthering the COPS concept, the Laredo Police Department added 19 officer workstations/buildings and still functions under the COPS concept; maintaining a focus on community policing issues.

To date, millions in federal funding dollars through the COPS Office of the DOJ have been awarded to the City of Laredo for continued hiring of personnel (both sworn and civilian) and for
the acquisition of better equipment and newer technology to enhance Laredo's COPS model of policing. Currently, the Laredo Police Department has been awarded a Universal Hiring Program COPS grant. This award allowed the LPD to hire 22 new police officers and assign them in order to build upon and expand on the community-oriented policing philosophy.

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*Universal Hiring Program  
**Civilian Personnel  
***Equipment (MDTs)  
****School Resource Officers

The crime situation on the U.S./Mexico border continues to be very volatile due to instability with the drug cartel scene and hard-line Mexican Federal Government drug enforcement activities. Unfortunately, this same instability negatively influenced tourism, trade and commerce on the U.S. side of the border and coupled with the national economic downturn, has forced local government to make hard decisions to eliminate, freeze or not fund even critical positions to include those of police officers. For the FY2010 budget, the City of Laredo necessarily opted to not fund 25 of approved 482 officer positions and freeze any position that is vacated by attrition.

These officers have to service a fluctuating population of 260,000 inhabitants. This translates to approximately 1.8 officers for every 1,000 inhabitants. The national average is at 2.4 officers for every 1,000 inhabitants. These numbers clearly show there is a need for added sworn personnel in the Laredo Police Department. Civilian personnel are also needed to accomplish departmental needs. The work done by civilian personnel allows sworn officers to be redeployed to the streets for field duty, where their expertise is of greater benefit to the community.
Solution
The Laredo Police Department, city government and the community have embraced Community-Oriented Policing. The City of Laredo has greatly benefitted from past support through the U.S. Department of Justice and COPS funding. The Laredo Police Department has made the most effective use of COPS strategies and funding. As such, continued support, both local and federal, is essential for the continued success of our community-policing philosophy.

Although the national economic crises affects everyone, it is imperative that DOJ offer creative ways to help finance law enforcement services that will help maintain and support a strong stance on not only crime in general but with committed emphasis on border security and seriously stemming border violence without overly taxing border communities. In 2010, the City of Laredo Police Department respectfully applied for DOJ/COPS funding for the hiring of 22 police officers. As of January 2016 we currently have 459 sworn personnel.

In 2010, DOJ/COPS awarded the City of Laredo Police Department a grant to hire 22 police officers translating to a benefit of $4.3 million. Most important is the fact that the augmentation of personnel at such a critical time in terms of economy and security greatly assists in safeguarding our community and nation’s safety. Our community is greatly appreciative of the diligent regard DOJ/COPS afforded our concerns for maintaining priority over identified community, border and homeland security issues. Without the COPS opportunities that have been awarded to the City of Laredo, we would not have had the ability to lower the city’s crime rate to the highest reduction in the state in a 2009-2015 comparison, with an overall crime drop index of 30%.

Target Agency
U.S. Department of Justice

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Domestic Violence Prevention

Situation Assessment
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that nearly one-third of U.S. women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Domestic violence is associated with an array of health problems. In the short-term, physical violence can result in serious injuries or even death. At least one-third of all female homicide victims in the U.S. are killed by male intimate partners.

Background
The City of Laredo’s recorded homicides in years 2013, 2014, and 2015 overwhelmingly were domestic violence related. The predominantly below poverty level that is present in the community raises the risk or presence of domestic violence in households. Many of these households include families of predominantly Spanish speaking only victims who do not understand or trust law enforcement for help. Many of the victims do not go to emergency shelters and do not convey the outcry for help to immediate family.

Solution
The Laredo Police Department is seeking funding for Domestic Violence prevention programs with a major component that includes collaboration with various community partners. These partners include other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, community coalitions, fraternal and civic organizations, youth-serving organizations, state and local governments, and school districts.

Target Agency
U.S. Department of Justice

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Drug Treatment and Addiction Rehabilitation

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo has a statistical population of 267,000. With the geographical location and high rate of poverty, the City has no real means of treating those with substance dependency with accessible rehabilitation. With the median age of 26.9, the large presence of young people makes the city a prime target for addiction to a variety of narcotics which is accessible due to the geographical location to Mexico.

Background
Heroin and Methamphetamine use have taken a heartbreaking toll on too many Americans and their families, while straining resources of law enforcement and treatment programs. More Americans now die every year from drug overdoses than they do in motor vehicle crashes. New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that opioids—a class of drugs that include prescription pain medications and heroin—were involved in 28,648 deaths in 2014. In particular, CDC found a continued sharp increase in heroin-involved deaths and an emerging increase in deaths involving synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl.

On February 04, 2016 the White House announced the President’s FY 2017 Budget which takes a two-pronged approach to address this epidemic. First, it includes $1 billion in new mandatory funding over two (2) years to expand access to treatment for prescription drug abuse and heroin use. This funding will boost efforts to help individuals with an opioid use disorder seek treatment, successfully complete treatment, and sustain recovery. Second, the President’s Budget includes approximately $500 million -- an increase of more than $90 million -- to continue and build on current efforts across the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Health and Human Services (HHS) to expand state-level prescription drug overdose prevention strategies, increase the availability of medication-assisted treatment programs, improve access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone, and support targeted enforcement activities. A portion of this funding is directed specifically to rural areas, where rates of overdose and opioid use are particularly high. To help further expand access to treatment, the Budget includes an HHS pilot project for nurse practitioners and physician assistants to prescribe buprenorphine for opioid use disorder treatment, where allowed by state law.

Solution
The Laredo Police Department is seeking funding for treatment programs with a major component that includes collaboration with various drug prevention partners within the community. These partners include other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, national and regional prevention organizations, community coalitions, fraternal and civic organizations, youth-serving organizations, state and local governments, and school districts.

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Emergency Operations Center

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo is vulnerable to a variety of hazards that threaten our communities, business and environment. Our city’s management and elected officials have taken a proactive approach to keeping our community safe. One way to ensure a safer community is the creation of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that will serve as a regional hub for disaster and emergency management.

The purpose of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is to provide a location where multiple levels of government, agencies, and organizations can coordinate decisions, resources, and public information on a strategic level. The EOC is a support element to the Incident Command structure. For all incidents, regardless of cause, response will focus on actions taken to save lives, sustain life, and protect infrastructure. Its design will be such that our public safety officials will be able to mitigate emergencies or disasters on both sides of the border. The city recognizes that a disaster that affects our neighbors to the south will defiantly affect our community. Coordination with Mexican authorities via our EOC is essential.

Background
The County of Webb, in which Laredo is located, is the 6th largest county of the 254 counties in the State of Texas. It covers 3,360 sq. miles or 2,139,217 acres. As the second fastest growing city in the nation, Laredo has outgrown its boundaries. The Laredo metropolitan area posted the largest gain in population of any other city along the Texas border. Laredo has an approximate population of 250,000 residents and its sister city, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, has a population of 600,000 residents.

Laredo is the main NAFTA corridor for the United States and correspondingly in Texas for international trade. Laredo has four International Bridges. Laredo carries 50% of all NAFTA related trade through Texas. Fifty percent of the trade that crosses through Laredo is Hazardous Material. United States, Mexico, Central and South America’s economies depend on secure bridges (the artery through which life flows for the business-trade sector). Terrorist actions or any disruptive situations would be detrimental to local, state, national and international economies. According to Laredo Development Foundation’s 2009 data, Laredo is the number one inland port in the United States with 2,108,857 annual tractor-trailer crossings and an additional 403,582 rail car crossings through our single railroad bridge. Almost half of the cargo that travels through the Laredo Corridor by land and rail carry Hazardous Materials. The Laredo Airport, a former U.S. Air Force Base, had approximately 265,677,742 pounds of freight land in 2009. Laredo has an enormous potential for a disaster involving Hazardous Materials due to the volume of Hazmat cargo, commerce, and tourism present on both sides of the border. Additionally, Laredo has over 60 million square feet of warehouse space and at least a quarter of that space contains hazardous materials and is highly vulnerable to Terrorism and Bio-Chemical Terrorism.

The City of Laredo is approximately 150 miles away from any Community that has the capability to assist us in an emergency. Due to this, Laredo is the primary Emergency Response mechanism to any emergency within our Region. In order to utilize Incident Command
Procedures to its fullest potential, a facility must be dedicated for mid to large-scale emergencies. When needed, the City of Laredo currently utilizes a classroom facility as an Emergency Management Center. The need for additional security and isolation measures is necessary. It is for this reason that we respectfully request the funding to assist us in the construction and implementation of a new dedicated Emergency Operations Center.

Solution
The construction of a dedicated multi agency, regional EOC (estimated to cost $6 million) to enhance interagency cooperation for day-to-day missions, as well as, function as a command center during times of crisis will greatly benefit our city and region.

Target Agency
Department of Homeland Security

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Funding for Body-Worn Cameras

Situation Assessment
In 2015 the federal government announced Federal funding for law enforcement agencies to purchase body-worn cameras and improve training. Federal funding, which would need to be matched by state and local police, could purchase 50,000 body-worn cameras.

Background
The local municipal Police Departments across the country join the Federal Government in seeking solutions to protests across the country over a Ferguson, Mo., and numerous similar cases which have led to Police mistrust. These cases have raised questions about how police treat minority communities. Distrust between local communities and law enforcement agencies is at an all-time high and body cameras have significantly improved that transparency that is needed for public trust.

The funding for cameras and training would be used by the federal government to match up to 50% spending by state and local police departments on body-worn cameras and storage for the equipment. The White House estimates that aspect of the program, which would cost $75 million, would help fund the purchase of 50,000 body-worn cameras. In 2014 the Laredo Police Department had at least four (4) Officer Involved Shootings. The advantage of having more readily available camera angles to help in investigations involving deadly use of force offers a unique perspective into the point of view from the officer’s perspective and also gives various, dependable alternative looks at officer’s immediate threat and reaction which would greatly assist in diffusing public doubts of Police actions.

Solution
We believe that monies ought to be considered the significant amount that it costs to maintain and store all the footage of body cams. Some departments have initiated entire divisions to handle the immense work load associated with these new police body cams.

Target Agency
U.S. Department of Justice

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Operation Stone Garden Funding

Situation Assessment
The Laredo Police Department is also asking for Stone Garden funding and Law Enforcement Border Security Grant funding for overtime to strategically place law enforcement officers from The Laredo Police Department in high traffic regions in the community to displace and dismantle Transnational Drug Organizations. The City of Laredo is one of the largest inland ports in the United States and has several thousand trucks crossing our ports of entry every day. The region represents one of the largest rural counties in South Texas and providing effective law enforcement deployments are paramount to maintaining Border Security.

Background
It is with this concept in mind that the Laredo Police Department endeavors to pursue funding and support to fund two full time positions to assign to the South Texas BIC, one police officer (Intelligence officer) and one civilian (criminal analyst). The tragic events of September 11, 2001, have virtually changed the manner by which law enforcement assesses potential threats in the community. This is even more evident along border cities, particularly those situated along the Mexican border. Cartel unrest and the escalation of violence in the major cities along the border have resulted in never before seen numbers of murders and disappearances. It is imperative that law enforcement agencies at the local, county and state levels develop a collaborative means to gather, analyze and share information. Critical community infrastructure such as those related to food, agriculture, public health, telecommunications, energy, transportation, and banking are now seen as potential targets. Intelligence must be incorporated into the planning process to reflect community problems and issues.

The Laredo Police Department has developed policy and a more robust process for gathering and analyzing information and has recently incorporated the Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) program into departmental operations and the department’s website. It is the belief that improving internal processes and developing a systems approach to intelligence gathering, along with collaboration with other law enforcement agencies to address problems related to crime, public safety, and terrorism can produce extraordinary results. Given our proximity to the Mexican border and four international bridges and a low-level international water boundary, Laredo experiences a large number of legal and illegal immigrants entering the United States. In addition, as the largest inland port on the southern border, large amounts of hazardous material not only cross, but are also stored in Laredo. Hazardous materials can easily be converted to weapons of mass destruction. By securing funding for these positions, the department can improve staffing of the South Texas BIC and ensure that working in collaboration with our local, state, and federal partners – public safety will truly be enhanced.

The Laredo Police Department has a 4 man Bomb Squad with bomb detection capabilities such as K-9s, a bomb robot and bomb protection suits. The Unit is also partnered up with The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive as part of an integrated ATF Task Force. The Unit has provided immediate response to our city and the surrounding jurisdiction providing coverage and detection in our large region in the South Texas area.
Computer security is one of the primary concerns for our agency like many other of the nation's companies and government agencies. Billions of dollars is spent each year on preventing external threats from entering protected networks. But the sad truth is that most computer network breaches are happening now than ever before. The FBI's Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) division has long been concerned about the security of criminal databases used by law enforcement officers. CJIS maintains such databases as NCIC, IAFIS, and VICAP, and these databases contain confidential information about criminals, suspects, and victims. CJIS is responsible for maintaining the privacy of that information, and it doesn't want unauthorized people to access it. In order to maintain the required minimum level of safety the Laredo Police Department has had to endure a substantial cost to meet those minimum requirements. The costs include the protection of Mobil Data Terminals in the patrol cars, desk tops in our head quarter offices and many other branches of our department that depend on these operating systems.

The Laredo Police Department has a police force of 454 sworn officers that serve a community of approximately 250,000 residents. The International Bridges processed 1,685,127 commercial motor vehicles in 2013. The influx of International Trade and the logistical challenges that it creates for the city in terms of deployment, manpower all the while maintaining minimum safety standard has stretched thin an already burdened city general fund.

**Solution**
The need to maintain control of transnational crime and provide essential safety levels of security for the City of Laredo, especially now with new additional challenges and threats; such as, the issue with domestic terrorism and infiltration of terrorist groups such as the new threat from ISIS, presents a real need for more intervention and collaboration between Federal, State and Local law enforcement agencies. The Laredo Police Department in an integral part of that solution and we are in need of funding to meet these ever growing challenges.

**Target Agency**
U.S. Department of Justice

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Threat vs. Population Based Funding Formulas

Situation Assessment
Border area communities must be classified as a separate threat risk zone when considering funding formulas for Targeted Infrastructure Capability grants. It serves to 1) Recognize the threats to the homeland because of our proximity to other countries. 2) Places us in a better position to be considered for funding the mitigation of these threats.

A separate threat assessment for border communities would accurately depict our vulnerabilities and the resources needed to strengthen our readiness level.

Background
Currently the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) formula for Targeted Infrastructure Capability grants is awarded based primarily on the population of a metropolitan area. Grants such as the Urban Area Strategic Initiative (UASI) or Port Security awards are out of Laredo’s reach because the population minimum does not meet grant criteria. While funding is typically distributed based on population and regardless of threat assessments, unique situations such as international border proximity, must be considered.

Laredo is the main NAFTA corridor for the United States and correspondingly in Texas for international trade. Laredo has four International Bridges. Laredo carries 50% of all NAFTA related trade through Texas. Fifty percent of the trade that crosses through Laredo is Hazardous Material. United States, Mexico, Central and South America’s economies depend on secure bridges (the artery through which life flows for the business-trade sector). Terrorist actions or any disruptive situations would be detrimental to local, state, national and international economies. According to Laredo Development Foundation’s 2009 data, Laredo is the number one inland port in the United States with 2,108,857 annual tractor-trailer crossings and an additional 403,582 rail car crossings through our single railroad bridge. Almost half of the cargo that travels through the Laredo Corridor by land and rail carry Hazardous Materials. The Laredo Airport, a former U.S. Air Force Base, had approximately 265,677,742 pounds of freight land in 2009. Laredo has an enormous potential for a disaster involving Hazardous Materials due to the volume of Hazmat cargo, commerce, and tourism present on both sides of the border. Additionally, Laredo has over 60 million square feet of warehouse space and at least a quarter of that space contains hazardous materials and is highly vulnerable to Terrorism and Bio-Chemical Terrorism.

As first responders in a community located on the US/Mexico Border, we face many and unique challenges. Examples of these are the enormous amount of commercial traffic that travels on our streets and crosses our four international bridges as a result of being the Nation’s largest inland port. Daily we face the possibility of chemical spill or hazardous materials release into our environment. Other examples we face as frontline emergency responders are:
1) We are the primary responders to incidents on the Rio Grande river,
2) We are the primary responders to bomb threats reported at our four international bridges,
3) Each year the number of emergency calls we make increase due to an ever increasing population, and
4) The ever present threat of an outbreak as 15,000 visitors crosses into our community every day.
Access to federal funding is essential to manage these threats efficiently and safely and to remain prepared for any number of emergencies that endanger our community.

**Solution**
We ask that support be given to legislation that considers the Border Region as a component of the National Critical Infrastructure Criteria due to its proximity to an area where there exists potential threats to security of the nation.

**Target Agency**
Department of Homeland Security

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Weather Satellite Imaging Equipment (Radar)

Situation Assessment
The National Weather Service provides vital weather information to the City of Laredo and other jurisdictions along the Texas Mexico Border. The information being relayed is not as reliable and/or accurate as we would like to see. Rainfall estimates and potential weather threats are hard for Meteorologists to predict because of the lack of weather monitoring equipment (radars) that cover our area. Our area is known to lack radar coverage.

Background
Currently the National Weather Service is in dire need to be able to accurately view and predict potential dangerous weather conditions in the South Texas Area. Cities rely on the information provided to make command decisions for the well being of the residents that they serve.

The recent July 2010 Flood showed that the National Weather Service had issues in acquiring all the necessary data to determine the potential impact of the heavy rains that came from Hurricane Alex. The information that the City of Laredo was getting was inaccurate; thus, causing concern of the validity of the data being given to us.

Access to federal funding to purchase and install radar weather monitoring equipment is essential to manage weather threats efficiently and safely and to remain prepared for any number of emergencies that endanger our community.

Solution
We ask that support be given to add a fully functional weather radar system that could be used by the National Weather to predict and monitor potentially dangerous weather systems that could negatively affect the residents of our community. Approximate cost is $1 million.

Target Agencies
Department of Homeland Security
National Weather Service

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Quality of Life
Situation Assessment
Both the Community Development Block Grant and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program Grant have faced cuts in funding over the last several years. The City of Laredo cannot overemphasize the importance of funding both CDBG and HOME at increased funding levels. A continued reduction of funds would have a devastating effect on the low to moderate-income citizens of this community and throughout the nation.

Background
Since 1975, the City of Laredo, Texas has received Community Development Block Grant Funds which have been directed towards activities that benefit low to moderate-income persons. In addition, these funds have been utilized to finance infrastructure improvements, water/sewer/drainage improvements, sidewalks, rehabilitation of the City’s older housing stock, the construction and enhancement of recreational parks/facilities, construction of police substations, code enforcement activities and graffiti removal, demolition of substandard units, and for the provision of public services.

Despite these improvements, the City remains in dire need of funding in order to continue to assist its impoverished community residents. The U.S. Census 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates indicated that the median income for households in the City of Laredo was $39,501 as compared to $53,035 for the State of Texas, and $53,657 for the nation. The Community Survey also indicated that 32.1% of Laredo’s families live below the poverty levels compared to 17.2% in the State, and 15.5% nationwide.

In turn, the City’s HOME program funds have been directed towards homeownership assistance, construction of rental units, and provision of tenant based rental assistance. The creation of affordable housing is crucial to the low and moderate income residents in the community. This is especially true of struggling families who have lost their homes to foreclosure. There are simply not enough safe, decent, and affordable homes available for this population.

Solution
The Community Development Block Grant Program and the HOME Program must continue at their present or at increased levels of funding, thereby allowing cities to continue to provide much needed help to their communities. We are requesting that legislators vote against any proposed cuts in CDBG and HOME funds.

Target Agency
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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Preserving Laredo’s Proprietary and Regulatory Rights in Dealing with Communications Providers and Expand Universal Fund Support for Broadband

Situation Assessment
The Telecommunications Industry is actively seeking to undercut Laredo’s real estate, zoning and taxing rights in the area of communications policy at the federal and state levels of government.

Background
In the 114th Congress, the rewrite of the Communications Act will be a leading legislative priority for the House and Senate leadership. There will be similar efforts to rewrite the nation’s communications regulatory policies at the Federal Communications Commission. These legislative and regulatory reviews will include efforts to undercut Laredo’s authority over managing its rights-of-way and zoning authority over cell tower siting and for its rights to receive just and reasonable compensation for the use of its facilities. Finally, there are expected to be efforts to harmonize the tax treatment of online commerce versus commerce conducted on Main Street, which Laredo supports.

Solutions
Protect Local Rights-of-Way: The City of Laredo calls on Congress to reject any legislative or Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) initiatives to preempt, or otherwise limit, the City of Laredo’s ability to manage its rights-of-way, including the ability to demand a fair rental payment for the use of same. Congress should make clear to the Commission that it must respect the statutory limitations Congress established in the Communications Act. Fairness and the financial health of local governments across the country demand that local governments retain the authority given them by the states to manage and obtain compensation for the use of their rights-of-way.

Oppose Preferential Tax Treatment for Cell Phones: The City of Laredo calls upon Congress to reject legislative initiatives to preempt state and local taxing authority on wireless service providers and their property. Adoption of such special-interest legislation would be a disservice to the taxpayers and citizens of the City of Laredo by undercutting the community’s ability to bring fairness and equity to our existing phone tax system.

Preserve PEG Programming and Support: The City of Laredo calls on the Congress to enact legislation that eliminates unnecessary limits on the use of PEG funds to capital and not operating purposes; creates a technology neutral definition of a cable system; bars discriminatory treatment of PEG channels and preserves PEG support and localism. In addition, Laredo calls on the Congress or the Federal Courts to protect Laredo’s 1% PEG support payment from the FCC’s Section 621 Order on Reconsideration that provides a cable operator may claim as a credit against franchise fees certain in-kind benefits such as services to schools and government buildings as well as certain I-Net benefits.

Protect Main Street Merchants and Local Revenues in Internet Age: Current tax laws favor on-line or remote commercial transactions as opposed to local purchases. Therefore, the
City of Laredo calls on Congress to adopt legislation such as the Marketplace Fairness Act, so that states might harmonize the tax treatment of transactions conducted on Main Street versus the Internet.

Support bringing broadband services to schools and libraries through the E-Rate program and to low income individuals through the Universal Service Lifeline program. The City of Laredo supports expansion of Universal Service Funds for broadband purposes as outlined by the FCC for schools, libraries and low income or high cost users.

Preserve Texas Subscriber Line Charge exemption to the Internet Access Tax Ban. The ITFA expired in November 2014. The City of Laredo calls on Congress to reject efforts to make the ban permanent and if Congress chooses to extend the ban, to ensure that there is no further encroachment on local taxes and fees such as the protected Texas Subscriber Line Charge. The City calls on Congress to oppose legislation that would restrict or preempt the ability of the City to tax digital goods and services such as downloaded music and video, online photo storage, payroll processing and computer programs. The City further opposes legislation that would affect our ability to collect cable franchise fee revenue on digital services such as pay- per-view or video on demand services.

Federal Courts Must Reinstate Laredo’s Zoning Authority over Tower Siting and Collocations. The Federal Communications Commission issued an order on October 17th, 2014 that deems a cell tower collocation application deemed granted if local authorities do not meet federal deadlines and extends the right to collocate facilities without all necessary local approvals to towers and base stations that do not involve a substantial change in physical dimension. These steps are not needed, as they would harm the robust deployment of wireless devices in Laredo, and violate Laredo’s 10th Amendment rights.

Target Agencies
Congress
Federal Communications Commission
Federal Courts

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Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo seeks to congressional authorization to complete the Chacon Creek study completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the purpose of providing flood control, natural habitat conservation and linear park development.

Background
The creek is a tremendous natural resource for Laredo with economic, recreational and educational potential, but a history of neglect, and illegal dumping of materials and debris mask this potential. Carter & Burgess, a strategic consulting firm, prepared a multi-objective master plan, which defined the creek’s 100-year floodplain, proposed targeted channel improvements to relieve flooding, maintain the overall natural character of the waterway, and add needed passive/active recreation facilities. Rather than build a 200-foot-wide concrete channel over the entire 4.5 miles of the corridor, as was suggested in a previous study, Carter & Burgess proposed targeted terraced channel enlargements over a much shorter distance – less than 4,000 feet – which would accentuate green spaces, preserve the creek’s natural course and minimize impact on wildlife and wetlands, while providing the most cost effective flood mitigation. These channel improvements require the removal of approximately 50 homes located in the 100-year floodplain. However, upon completion of the proposed improvements, the reduction in 100-year floodplain elevation will remove approximately 250 homes from the floodplain. Workshops and public hearings were conducted and helped answer citizens’ questions about the master plan and other issues, while including the public in the design process.

The project would provide flood risk management, ecosystem restoration and recreational amenities to Chacon Creek in the eastern part of the city of Laredo, Texas. The flood risk management component of the project will consist of the permanent evacuation of 73 residential structures along Chacon Creek. The vacated flood risk management lands will be used for recreational amenities. The ecosystem restoration component will include 16.75 acres of wetland restoration and 401 acres of riparian restoration. The project provides $539,000 in annual flood risk management benefits, $1,049,800 in recreation benefits, and an increase in 248 average annual habitat units. The benefit-cost ratio is 1.52 to 1 at 4 1/8 percent and 1.01 to 1 at 7 percent.

The project is fully supported by the local sponsor because Chacon Creek is the last unaltered tributary to the Rio Grande within the city limits of Laredo and has tremendous potential to be a valuable environmental, recreational and educational amenity for the area and the region.

The proposal also addressed leisure and cleanup issues. Laredo city leaders envision the creek offering recreational, educational and economic opportunities. A multi-objective approach would create “people spaces,” while developing amenities, such as a hike and bike trail system and perhaps, a regional park. The plan emphasizes ecosystem restoration, transforming a once-abandoned area littered with tires, barrels and pallets into a year-round attraction for citizens and visitors. In addition, the plan recommends park benches be placed along the routes, creating natural habitat zones to study and admire indigenous vegetation. Similarly, the Chacon Creek project includes enhancing existing babbling brooks and preserving acres of native plants and
trees. Developing this natural treasure would generate hundreds of acres of new recreational and educational parklands. Moreover, it would yield important by products, such as eliminating illegal dumpsites, improving water quality and drawing attention to the city’s natural resources.

An Independent External Peer Review (IEPR) occurred in early FY 2011 on a near-completed draft report. The Corps’ Fort Worth District was addressing IEPR comments and preparing the report for public review and comment when work was suspended due to lack of a study authority. Routine schedule maintenance occurred for the remainder of FY 2011 and through FY 2012.

As part of Section 7001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014) requires the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to publish a notice in the Federal Register to request proposals from non-federal interests for proposed feasibility studies and proposed modifications to authorized USACE water resources development projects or feasibility studies. City of Laredo had submitted the Chacon Creek feasibility study reauthorization proposals to the Army Corps of Engineers in December 1, 2014.

Solution
The study currently does not have an authority. The Fort Worth District and Corps Headquarters have worked with the sponsor’s Congressional delegation to secure a study authority with little success. The project currently has a near-completed draft report ready to be released for public comment but is unable to do so due to the lack of a study authority. Currently, the City is moving forward with completing the report under Section 203 of WRRDA 2014. Additionally, the City of Laredo is requesting congressional inclusion in the next Water Resources Development Act for construction funding.

Target Agency
Army Corps of Engineers

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Support for the Section 206 Ecosystem Restoration Projects

**Situation Assessment**

The Riverbend area has been adversely impacted due to gravel quarrying and subsequent infestations of exotic plants. The recommended plan would help to restore the degraded ecosystem by enlarging existing wetlands, removing exotic plants and re-vegetating the existing aquatic and terrestrial systems with native plants species and restricting vehicular access to the area. Implementation of the project would substantially improve habitat for local wildlife, including three federally endangered species and several state listed threatened and endangered species.

This project will promote eco-tourism, habitat restoration, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and provide homeland security.

**Background**

Due to increased trade with Mexico, Laredo has increased its size from 30 square miles to over 90 square miles in less than 10 years. With this explosive growth, the availability of natural areas and green spaces has diminished considerably. In order to reverse this trend, the City of Laredo passed a Green Spaces Preservation Ordinance in 2004 that requires buffer zones along creeks and streams. This ordinance affects new development and will preserve the mid to upper areas of Laredo’s watersheds. The City is also seeking funds to purchase property and to develop natural restoration projects on developed properties that will tie into these buffer areas to create a linear park/conservation system throughout Laredo. Currently, the City has developed the Chacon Creek master plan, which will create a park/conservation system for Chacon Creek.

This project will transform Chacon Creek from Lake Casa Blanca to the Rio Grande into a park/conservation system that will tie recreation facilities, such as baseball parks and soccer fields, into untouched natural areas through a system of nature trails. Furthermore, the City of Laredo is developing an area of river front property near downtown Laredo (known as the River Vega Master Plan), which will be an economic stimulus for the downtown area as well as for tourism.

Another key project is the River Bend Ecosystem Restoration Project, which aims at restoring a unique area, which has historically been ravaged by erosion and misuse. The project was authorized by Section 206 of WRDA of 1996 (P.L. 104-303). The Army Corps of Engineers completed a feasibility study to refine the costs, benefits, and plans associated with the restoration of the river bend area. The plan, as presented, identifies the project to include cleaning and removing exotic plant species; stabilizing major areas of erosion; reforestation with native trees and shrubs; and excavating the gravel pits to expand the wetland area and create islands. The FONSI was signed in September 2013 and the design is under way. The design is complete. In October of 2015, USCOE Fort Worth District has awarded a contract to M.D. Merrett Inc. for $2.44 million for the removal of invasive species and illegally dumped debris. The project is expected to be under construction in February 2015.
Project implementation is estimated to cost approximately $5.9 million; 65% of the cost would be shared by the federal government and 35% by the City. The City’s share consists of cash and/or in-kind services in the form of lands and easements.

**Solution**
This project is funded. City is looking to meet with USCOE to update them on the status of this project.

**Target Agency**
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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Transportation
Enforcement of Overweight Commercial Vehicles
Entering the United States through Laredo Ports of Entry

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo supports the enforcement of overweight commercial vehicles entering the United States through the Colombia Solidarity Bridge and the World Trade Bridge.

Background
The U.S. Customs and Border Protection processed approximately two (2) million commercial vehicles during FY 2014 at the Colombia Solidarity Bridge and the World Trade Bridge.

Currently there is no weigh-in motion system in the Port of Entry (POE) to detect overweight commercial vehicles entering the United States. Texas Department of Public Safety currently has a weigh-in motion system on Loop 20 as commercial vehicles exit the World Trade Bridge POE but is not enforced 100% of the time. Texas Department of Public Safety currently has a weigh in motion system in the Colombia Inspection Facility and conducts 100% weight verification but there is no enforcement for City streets.

Our position is based on years of experience in balancing international trade flow and safety, and we agree that the installation of equipment and enforcement of overweight commercial vehicles entering the United States through the Laredo land Ports of Entry is necessary for the construction and maintenance of the roads in which the commercial vehicles travel. Carriers with overweight trucks will be required to obtain a permit prior to entering the United States.

Solution
The City of Laredo is committed to continuing its excellence in handling cross border traffic, goods and people in the most efficient and secure manner as possible, and therefore, supports the installation of equipment and enforcement of overweight commercial vehicles entering the United States through the Laredo land Ports of Entry.

Target Agencies
General Services Administration
Department of Homeland Security
Texas Department of Public Safety

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Expansion and Construction of Additional Exit Booths with Lane and a Weigh-In-Motion System in all Exit Lanes at the World Trade Bridge Port of Entry

Situation Assessment
The number of north bound trucks that crossed the World Trade Bridge in 2015 was 1,643,334. The average year-over-year increase for the World Trade Bridge is 7.5%. As the commercial truck traffic continues to increase, the exit inspection booths from World Trade Bridge become congested and crossing wait times increase. This results in additional vehicle emissions, wasted fuel and time. Currently, there are five exit lanes at World Trade Bridge and commercial traffic entering the country is not weighed or otherwise identified resulting in additional wear and tear and damage to the City’s roadway system.

Background
Currently there are five (5) lanes each with CBP booths and no weigh-in motion system in the World Trade Bridge Port of Entry (POE). This project will allow for quicker movement and weight verification of overweight commercial vehicles entering the United States and traveling on commercial truck routes and into industrial parks.

The City of Laredo owns a track of land west of the exit stations at the World Trade Bridge POE that may be used for exit inspection booths and a weigh-in-motion system.

Based on years of experience in balancing international trade flow and safety the expansion and construction of additional exit inspection booths with lanes and a weigh-in-motion system in all exit lanes will be beneficial to the City of Laredo and the World Trade Bridge POE.

Solution
The City of Laredo seeks Federal and State participation in increasing the number of exit lanes from five (5) to nine (9) lanes, and a weigh-in-motion system to alleviate the congestion in the GSA inspection area as well as providing a mechanism to identify trucks with overweight loads and charge overweight fees to offset the cost of repairing those roadways which form a part of Laredo’s overweight corridor. Estimated construction cost $5 million - $7 million.

Target Agencies
General Services Administration
Department of Homeland Security
Federal Highway Administration

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Federal Standards and Inspection of Rail Lines

Situation Assessment
A constant threat to the safety of Laredo's residents is the condition of the railroad tracks and at-grade crossings. The potential for a catastrophe derailment exists, not only from a derailment itself, but also from the hazardous materials that are carried on rail cars through the center of the city on a regular basis. The condition of rail lines is a serious safety concern that should be a priority for the Federal Railroad Administration.

Laredo is serviced by two major railroads: The Union Pacific Railroad and the Kansas City Southern Railroad both of which have operated in Laredo and used the city as a crossing point between the U.S. and Mexico for over a century. Residential populations and industrial facilities have grown around the railroad right of way, creating conflicts between the needs of the industry and residents and the needs of the railroads. Today, there are 135 miles of track and the FRA database lists approximately 74 grade crossings within the corporate city limits. With Laredo's rapidly growing population and an astonishing increase in operations by the rail companies, it is evident that intermodal conflicts will only worsen.

The number of rail cars handled by the rail companies has steadily increased. At least one Federal Railroad Administration report prepared many years ago determined "The long closure time at the crossings due to slow and frequent train movements causes severe congestion and delay for the cars and trucks that use these crossings. These queue lengths often cause stopped delays for as high as 30 minutes or more for a single vehicle at one time." In spite of this acknowledgment, neither the railroad companies nor FRA have produced any results. Railroad companies, when engaged on this issue, recognize the poor condition of the rail lines and the at-grade crossings but slow to make repairs and improvements.

Proposed Solution
Minimum rail and at-grade crossing standards and federal inspections of rail lines on a periodic basis would ensure that railroad companies maintain their tracks and crossings at adequate standards, thus reducing the possibility for a derailment. The City of Laredo supports efforts to implement rail line and at-grade crossing standards and inspection of same by the Federal Rail Administration.

Target Agency
Federal Railroad Administration

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Funding Support for New Maintenance and Operations Facility

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo and El Metro Transit System are requesting funding for the construction of a new Bus Maintenance, Operations and Administration facility to meet the growing needs of public transportation for the City of Laredo.

Background
A new Maintenance and Operations facility will house buses, paratransit vans, fueling station (CNG, diesel, and unleaded), operations, maintenance, and administration for the transit system and will also allow for the growth of the transit system.

The City of Laredo’s transit system affords a critical service for the community by providing 3.3 million passenger trips annually. Currently the transit system is comprised of 49 heavy duty buses, 18 paratransit vans and support vehicles, and has outgrown the present operations and maintenance facility located in the central part of the city. It is anticipated that the future growth of the transit system will require a transit fleet comprised of approximately 100 buses, 40 vans and support vehicles. The current facility which is located in a residential neighborhood will be replaced with a new operations and maintenance center which is located in an area zoned for this type of activity as the proposed site has been acquired and platted on 23 acres in close proximity to the city’s airport.

Solution
The City of Laredo has acquired the necessary land and has completed the design with a contracted engineering firm for the new facility. Since, the estimated total cost for completion of the project is over $35 million; additional Federal funds are required to begin construction and complete this much needed facility for the City of Laredo. The City of Laredo is asking for Congressional support for our competitive application of $35 million to complete this project.

Target Agency
Federal Transit Administration

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Hachar Parkway

Situation Assessment
Given the limitations and high cost of widening FM 1472, more than an additional two lanes, a new roadway is needed to relieve FM 1472. The City of Laredo is actively pursuing a new capacity roadway known as Hachar Parkway which will intersect FM 1472 approximately 4.8 miles north of World Trade Bridge and stretch east to intersect with I-35. The first phase of this proposed roadway is currently undergoing environmental assessment to establish and environmentally clear a 400’ by an approximate 8.5 mile right of way.

The City has expended in excess of $1,000,000 of its own funds in pushing this project through the environmental process as well as programming funding so that it may be included in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Subsequent phases are envisioned to include an interchange with I-35 and continuation of the roadway eastward to connect to the proposed outer loop.

The City received positive support from the Texas Legislature for this project when it was designated an overweight corridor. With more than 6,000 acres of warehousing in the City of Laredo this roadway will also serve additional industrial parks fronting the east side of I-35 at mile marker 13, including an additional 2,000 acres of warehousing being planned and Union Pacific Railroads $90 million intermodal facility expansion which are both the result of the growth in international trade. The estimated construction cost for the first phase main lanes is $24 million - $30 million.

Solution
The City of Laredo seeks Federal and State participation in completing this roadway the need for which is a direct result of the growth in international trade.

Target Agency
Federal Highway Administration

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Implement Capital Program to Replace Aging Transit Fleet

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo has a bus fleet which totals forty-nine (49) heavy-duty diesel and compressed natural gas powered buses for fixed route services as well as an additional eighteen (18) Paratransit vans for the Demand Response service that complements the fixed route service. The current annual ridership within the urbanized area of Laredo is over 3.3 million passenger trips this alongside to the severe summer temperatures produce a strain on the transit system’s aging bus fleet.

Background
Public transportation is critical for the City of Laredo as thousands of people are transit dependent and utilize El Metro buses every day to go to work, attend business and attend school. Public Transportation alleviates traffic and congestion challenges while having a positive impact on the environment for public transportation reduces energy consumption.

The Laredo Transit Center is conveniently located in the downtown area whereas a large number of local and rural commuters connect within the transit system; in addition El Metro administration is working with the Laredo Community College (LCC) Administration to promote Transit amongst students by building accessible and conveniently located boarding stations in the South Laredo Community College Campus.

The high demand and utilization of the Laredo buses along with the summer heat has taken a significant toll on our existing equipment making replacement of buses a priority for the City of Laredo. As the buses age, additional funds are spent to maintain the buses adequately. Additional capital funding is required to purchase the needed replacement with heavy duty buses so as to continue the provision of adequate and cost effective transit service within the City of Laredo.

According to Federal Transit Administration guidelines, the useful service life expectancy of a heavy duty transit bus is twelve (12) years or five hundred thousand (500,000) miles. In 2016, the Laredo bus fleet will have fourteen (14) buses that will have exceeded this threshold; about 30% of the fixed route fleet will be obsolete and or over its life expectancy.

Solution
The City of Laredo requires $6.5 million in Federal assistance to replace its aging bus fleet. This level of Federal funding would allow the city to replace the buses that have exceeded their useful life and also allow the transit system to continue to provide cost efficient and reliable public transit service for the citizens of Laredo and those that visit Laredo. The City of Laredo is asking for Congressional support for our competitive application to the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Program (TIGER) Grant in the amount of $6.5 million.

Target Agency
Federal Transit Administration
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**Improve State Loop 20 to Interstate Standards**

**Situation Assessment**
State Loop 20, in Laredo, Texas has been developed in two sections. The first section to be developed was the portion of Loop 20 known as “Bob Bullock Loop” and it is an on-system roadway. It begins on the west side of the City of Laredo at the entrance to Laredo’s World Trade Bridge and begins to circle the city as it crosses under Interstate Highway 35 (which said section to I-35 is now designated I-69) and continues east and southward through its intersection with US 59 to SH 359.

“Cuatro Vientos Road”, which is the second segment of State Loop 20, is an on-system roadway which parallels US 83, beginning at SH 359 on the north, at the intersection of Loop 20, and extending 7.25 miles south to connect with US 83, a Texas Trunk System Road. The road alleviates congestion along US 83, resulting in better roadway system capacity through increased average peak operating speeds, and reductions in travel times and accidents. The corridor allows residents in South Laredo and nearby communities to access jobs and centers of trade more efficiently.

While the Cuatro Vientos Road section from SH 359 to Mangana Hein has been opened, there remains the widening of that portion of Loop 20 from I-35 to US 59 which is critical to continued mobility within the City. This widening to interstate standards is critical as the Level of Service (LOS) for this roadway is projected to continue to decrease over next 5-10 years. This roadway has been identified by the Texas Department of Transportation’s I-69 Segment Four & Five Committee as the proposed I-69 corridor along with US 59 East.

The design, to interstate highway standards, of Loop 20 to Havana Drive has been funded; however the right-of-way acquisition, design and construction of the remaining corridor segment have not been funded. Allocation of State Proposition 1, State Proposition 7, legacy Coordinated Border Infrastructure Funds and Category 7 funds available to the Metropolitan Planning Organization can be programmed for these tasks; however build out would take ±14 years. The City seeks a more comprehensive funding solution to complete this vital project in a safe, efficient and timely fashion. It is estimated that for construction alone the cost is, in 2016 dollars, $235,117,917.97.

**Proposed Solution**
The City of Laredo supports the full funding of the State Loop 20/I-69W corridor segment to Interstate Standards Project.

**Target Agency**
Federal Highway Administration

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I-69 Segment Five Recommendations and Priority Sections

Source: I-69 Four & Five Committee Report and Recommendations
Industrial Park Roadway Reconstruction

Situation Assessment
The enormous volumes of truck traffic have had a significant effect on the roadway within the City’s industrial parks. Most roads are mainly asphalt and the constant heavy truck traffic has damaged this infrastructure. There are more than 30 industrial parks which serve the bulk of the truck traffic coming from and going to the World Trade Bridge and the Columbia Solidarity Bridge. The poor conditions of these roadways are unsafe and inefficient.

Solution
The City of Laredo seeks Federal and State participation in the reconstruction of major portions of roadway within the industrial parks, converting them from asphalt to concrete.

Target Agency
Federal Highway Administration

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Modernization of the Laredo International Airport

It is of paramount importance to the City of Laredo and region to complete the modernization of the Laredo International Airport, an airport of national and international significance. Failure to modernize will create a choke point to regional economic expansion.

Trade, commerce and employment opportunities will be negatively impacted, not only in Laredo, Texas but also at U.S. communities whose exports and imports depend on the Laredo International Airport. Air cargo, primarily auto parts processed at LRD touches 39 industrial communities.

LRD Highlights:

- Air Traffic Operations have increased an average of 108% during past five (5) years.
- LRD is the only airport in the U.S. with an operation of Mexican Customs to pre-inspect south bound air cargo.
- Industries participating under Mexican Customs pre-inspection include auto parts, automotive manufacturing, electronics/electrical and aerospace.
- The number 1 air cargo commodity at LRD is auto parts. Mexico is expanding its auto industry thus LRD can expect to grow its air cargo.
- LRD is the only primary commercial service airport in the U.S. with CBP availability 24/7 to include clearance of air cargo.
- The new LRD FIS houses two nations’ Customs under one roof. The FIS was an RSAT project funded by the City of Laredo.

Pending modernization projects include, but not limited, to the following:

1. Replace V-Ring Localizer Antenna and Mark 1F Transmitter

Situation Assessment
A Category I Instrument Landing System (ILS) services Runway 17R/35L instrument approach procedures. It is the only ILS for LRD and is equipped with a vintage 1960’s V-Ring Localizer Antenna that provides a back course procedure to Runway 35L. Recently, an unfortunate vehicular incident crashed the V-Ring Localizer Antenna and FAA replaced most Localizer components except for the antennas. The same antennas were re-installed.

Background
This type of localizer antenna is very old, requires more maintenance, and FAA is losing the ability to find replacement parts. We are also very concerned that the FAA will not be able to provide replacement parts leading to a possible loss of LRD’s only land based precision instrument approach.

Solution
The City of Laredo requests that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) replace the V-Ring Antenna with a modern Log Periodic with the ability to provide a back course approach. Also,
we request that the Mark 1F transmitter be replaced with a Mark 20A transmitter. This will provide redundancy in case one transmitter goes out of service.

2. Install a Log Periodic ILS at Runway 17L/35R

**Situation Assessment**
A Category I Instrument Landing System (ILS) services Runway 17R/35L instrument approach procedures. It is the only ILS for LRD and is equipped with a vintage 1960’s V-Ring Localizer Antenna that provides a back course procedure to Runway 35L.

**Background**
This type of localizer antenna is very old, requires more maintenance, and FAA is losing the ability to find replacement parts. We are also very concerned that the FAA will not be able to provide replacement parts leading to a possible loss of LRD’s only land based precision instrument approach.

**Solution**
The City of Laredo requests that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) install an ILS at Runway 17L/35R this will provide LRD with redundancy in case the ILS to Runway 17R/35 goes out of service.

3. Construct Replacement Air Traffic Control Tower

**Situation Assessment**
The current LRD tower built in 1970 by the Department of Defense is in constant need of repairs and does not conform to current FAA Air Traffic Control Tower specifications and is OSHA non-compliant. The (2005 and 2015) Airport Master Plan recommended a replacement tower be built to comply with current FAA specifications and to enhance airport operational safety. To maintain line of sight requirements a replacement ATCT will be necessary as LRD extends Runway 17L.

**Background**
The Laredo Air Traffic Control Tower is property of the Federal Aviation Administration and the air traffic controllers are contract employees.

The City of Laredo petitions the Federal Aviation Administration to program a replacement Air Traffic Control Tower at the earliest possible time.

A new Air Traffic Control Tower will provide sustainability. The existing tower is in constant need of repairs.
4. Increase Air Traffic Control Tower Services

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo, Texas respectfully requests that the Federal Aviation Administration extend the number of hours the Contract Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) at the Laredo International Airport (LRD) to 24 hours daily. This request is made to enhance safety, security and support U.S. industry. The Laredo International Airport is an important cargo hub for NAFTA countries.

Background
Operated by RVG LRD’s Contract ATCT is currently open M-F from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 midnight, Saturday’s from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Sunday’s from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Current staffing consists of one supervisor and five (5) controllers. An additional 53 hours per week are required to enable 24/7 operations.

To date the City of Laredo has received 19 letters of support from industry regarding this initiative to operate LRD’s ATCT 24/7.

There is no doubt that operating the Laredo ATCT 24/7 will significantly enhance aviation/airport safety and security, is of national interest for U.S. industry, and that the benefits of keeping LRD’s ATCT open 24/7 by far outweighs the cost.

Target Agencies
The Federal Aviation Administration

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Railway Operational Improvements

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo has worked to establish relationships and dialogue with the Union Pacific Railroad and the Kansas City Southern Railroad both of which have operated in Laredo and have used the city as a crossing point between the U.S. and Mexico for over a century. In these discussions, several solutions have been proposed and federal guidance, cooperation and action is needed to support these measures to reduce train delays at the international rail bridge which cause the trains to block at grade crossings for extended periods of time.

Proposed Solutions
Use of International Crews
Train delays often occur at the international rail bridge as Mexican and U.S. operators must switch before crossing the international boundary. International crews can solve the problem by hauling trains across the bridge. By doing so, regular crews on both sides of the border will be able to take drags back to their respective rail yards. These crews would only be allowed to travel within an established rail trade zone, which would include rail yards on both sides of the bridge and all rail lines between them. Engineers from both countries would be licensed by their respective company to work within the rail trade zone. Furthermore, international crew members would be required to be bilingual to communicate by radio with yardmasters, dispatchers, etc. This would also allow for paperwork, such as track warrants and train lists, to be distributed in either language.

Air Brake Testing
Another source of congestion occurs as trains block crossings for long periods of time while air brakes are tested. In order to reduce the blockage of railroad crossings, it is proposed that the air brakes on rail cars be tested before they cross into the U.S. Tests will be conducted to meet the standards established by the Federal Railroad Administration.

The City of Laredo supports a binational effort to implement these operational changes.

Target Agency
Federal Railroad Administration
Homeland Security - Customs and Border Protection

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Riverside Boulevard Development

Situation Assessment
The proposed Riverside Boulevard extends from Loop 20 near the World Trade Bridge north to El Pico Road/the proposed intersection of the Hachar Parkway and FM 1472 (Old Mines Road). The proposed roadway would consist of an approximately three miles-long five lane urban divided roadway consisting of four travel lanes with a continuous center turning lane and bicycle and pedestrian accommodations within a proposed 150 foot Right-of-Way (ROW). The project would serve as a parallel corridor to FM 1472 that would separate automobile traffic from the heavy truck traffic along the FM 1472 Corridor. The parallel route would serve to relieve congestion and improve safety, mobility, and access to residential developments in northern Laredo. The potential also exists for the roadway to spur development in this highly scenic area. Design considerations would also be made to ensure that the project is designed to complement the proposed Laredo Low Water Weir.

Solution
The City of Laredo strongly urges the State and Federal Governments begins the process of providing for the widening of I-35 to a six lane divided highway to enhance safety and increase efficiency and improve the highway’s level of service.

Target Agency
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Support and Status of the Renovation and Modernization of the Laredo Bridge 1, Convent Avenue Port of Entry (Gateway to the Americas Bridge)

Situation Assessment
The City of Laredo supports the renovation and modernization of the Laredo Bridge 1, Convent Avenue Port of Entry (Gateway to the Americas Bridge).

Background
The U.S. Customs and Border Protection processed approximately 3.2 million pedestrians and 1 million non-commercial vehicles during FY 2014 at the Gateway to the Americas Bridge also known as International Bridge I. Currently, the Port of Entry (POE) has three pedestrian processing stations inside the facility and five (5) temporary pedestrian processing stations underneath the canopy next to the 4 primary inspection stations for passenger vehicle processing.

Our position is based on years of experience in balancing international trade flow and safety, and we agree that the pedestrian processing area must be expanded and renovated to process approximately 8,900 pedestrians daily, but this must be done with local input. The POE should have adequate processing stations and personnel in order to reduce the wait time on the bridge crossing itself. The City of Laredo receives complaint calls from all sectors of the community as well as its neighboring citizens to the South. It is in the best interest of all parties involved to expand and renovate the Laredo Bridge 1, Convent Avenue POE.

The City of Laredo is committed to continuing its excellence in handling cross border traffic, goods and people in the most efficient and secure manner as possible, and therefore, supports the renovation and modernization of the Laredo Bridge 1, Convent Avenue POE (Gateway to the Americas Bridge).

In December 2015, Congressman Henry Cuellar (D-TX-28) announced the awarding of $26.8 million for long awaited renovations to the Gateway to the Americas International Bridge, also known as Convent Avenue Bridge 1 in Laredo. Congressman Cuellar secured funding during the U.S. House Appropriations Committee Fiscal Year 2014 budget.

Solution
The City of Laredo supports the U.S. General Services Administration and the Department of Homeland Security to renovate and modernize the Laredo Bridge 1, Convent Avenue POE (Gateway to the Americas Bridge).

Target Agencies
General Services Administration
Department of Homeland Security
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Widen FM 1472 “Mines Road”

Situation Assessment
FM 1472 begins at I-35, Exit #4 (approximately 4-4.5 miles southern terminus of I-35 at the Juarez Lincoln Bridge, Laredo’s international bus and passenger vehicle bridge). FM 1472 generally follows the northwesterly course of the Rio Grande crossing under I-69W/Loop 20. West of this crossing at the terminus of I-69W/Loop 20 is the City of Laredo’s World Trade Bridge, Laredo’s busiest international commercial truck crossing. After this crossing FM 1472’s route continues in a northwesterly direction approximately 18.8 miles until it intersects with SH 255, the Camino Columbia Toll Road (owned by the State of Texas). At this juncture SH 255 intersects FM 1472 from the west and the entry to the Colombia Solidarity Bridge, an international bridge owned by the City of Laredo, is to its east. The road continues through unincorporated Webb County reaching the end of pavement north of Carricitos Creek. The unimproved section continues approximately 43.60 miles until the paved section resumes at FM 1021 in Maverick County which is approximately 45.35 mile from the city of Eagle Pass.

From the point FM 1472 crosses under I-69W/Loop 20 for approximately 3.5 - 4 miles along its northwesterly course, FM 1472 carries enormous volumes of commercial truck traffic. This traffic is generated by the World Trade Bridge (some fourteen thousand plus truck crossings daily) and some of Laredo’s most dense warehousing/industrial parks. FM 1472 also serves major residential developments as well resulting in severe traffic congestion with frequent wait times in excess of two hours during peak drive times. This volume of traffic has caused roadway deterioration. Preliminary results of TxDOT studies indicate that additional capacity is needed to alleviate safety and congestion issues on this roadway but given limited right-of-way and encroaching development, the additional capacity that can be added is only one component of solving the FM 1472 problem. A relief/alternate roadway must also be considered.

The Laredo Metropolitan Organization has programmed $4.2 million to provide one lane of extra capacity and $600,000 to synchronize traffic signalization but it is limited in funding and unable to pursue more robust improvements.

Solution
The City of Laredo seeks more robust funding solutions to improve the safety and efficiency of FM 1472 by adding extra capacity (additional lanes).

Target Agency
Federal Highway Administration

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Widen I-35

Situation Assessment
I-35 is a vital segment of the national freight system. Commercial truck traffic from Laredo’s bridges rely on this roadway to move freight to distribution centers in Texas and throughout the United States. The 150 mile stretch of this highway from Laredo to San Antonio has seen little in recent years in substantive improvement and other than the Texas Freight Mobility Plan’s recognition that the “I-35 corridor from Laredo to the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, serve as major distribution locations” no capacity enhancements have been made.

The Freight Mobility Plan predicts the highest increase in truck volumes are projected to be on I-35, I-10, I-45, and I-40. The Plan states that “Increased congestion, truck tonnage, daily truck trips, and truck VMT on the Texas highway network; coupled with population growth and other factors, will significantly constrain the efficient movement of freight and people throughout the state.

In 2014, over 19 percent of interstate centerline miles were considered deficient, by 2040 that number will grow to over 45 percent. Large stretches of interstate corridors are predicted to have unacceptable Levels of Service (LOS) in 2040, including: I-35 from Laredo to Dallas-Fort Worth, I-45 from Houston to Dallas, I-10 from Houston to San Antonio, I-20 in Fort Worth to US 84 in Abilene, I-10 from I-20 to El Paso, US 59 from I-20 to Houston.”

Truck traffic on the Laredo –San Antonio segment of I-35 has continued to increase and on any given day sections of this four lane divided highway are subject to being shut down for hours, leading to truck and vehicular traffic coming to a standstill for hours.

Solution
The City of Laredo strongly urges the State and Federal Governments begins the process of providing for the widening of I-35 to a six (6) lane divided highway to enhance safety and increase efficiency and improve the highway’s level of service.

Target Agency
Federal Highway Administration

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