

TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
“TRANSPORTATION PLANNING”

SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. I am Keith Selman, Director of Planning for the City of Laredo, Texas where I also serve as the Director of the Laredo MPO. I have been invited to testify before this subcommittee to outline the uniqueness and significance of just one, small MPO.

This City of Laredo is located on your border between the United States of America and the Republic of Mexico. Historically a city of modest population and often times experiencing depression-like economic indicators, Laredo is now a thriving community of approximately 225,000 people. This boom in growth can in large part be attributed to trade between the two nations.

Laredo is the largest inland port on the U.S./Mexico Border. There are 2 international bridges owned and operated by the City of Laredo for over the road commercial loads and one international rail bridge owned by Kansas City Southern but utilized by Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern, Kansas City Southern Mexico, and occasionally Burlington. In 2007, 2.15 million loaded trucks crossed Laredo's bridges while 396,749 rail cars crossed the rail bridge. The combined value of goods crossing the border in 2007 was \$347.3 billion.

As you can easily surmise, Laredo is a major player in the economies of both nations as thousands of jobs are dependent upon the expeditious flow of goods. However, the impact on quality of life and the transportation network within the community cannot be over exaggerated. Neighborhoods bisected by rail and truck traffic have seen increases in both of approximately 60% in one decade.

The problems created from these two modes are unique. Neighborhoods in the vicinity of our 80 plus at-grade crossings that for decades experienced one or two trains per day now endure constant engine and whistle noise. Roadway systems (both on and off) are challenged daily in signal timing, turning radii, and the roadway structure as thousands of trucks move throughout the community on any given day. While just a snapshot of only two issues, I hope this exemplifies the impact the movement of the nations goods can have on a smaller community.

The MPO provides the only local forum for cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning. It meets the needs of a booming community of international significance while ensuring a local voice in the expenditure of Federal transportation dollars. Despite its growth, Laredo remains a relatively poor community with a large population base living at or below the poverty level. Simply stated, without the resources of the MPO, and without the franchising of local participation created by the MPO, mobility solutions for the wellbeing of the community and the defining of projects to enhance and ensure the movement of goods for the nation's wellbeing would not be communally realized.