Paisano, Welcome to Laredo

*City of Laredo celebrates 19 years helping Mexican citizens return home for holidays*

**Laredo, TX—Dec 6, 2016**—For the past 18 years, the City of Laredo has hosted a *Paisano* Rest Stop to help Mexican citizens returning home from throughout the U.S. have a smoother experience as they head home for the holidays. This unique bi-national project is offered only in Laredo, Texas. The City of Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau works with the Mexican Consulate General to set-up the rest stop; however, there are many city, state and federal departments and agencies from both sides of the border who come together to help the *paisanos*.

The *Paisano* Rest Stop will be at IH-35 southbound, just off Mile Marker 13, beginning Friday, December 16, at 12 noon and closing at 12 noon on Sunday, December 18, 2016. For 48 continuous hours, the rest stop has individuals who help review documents necessary for travelers. Information on bridge wait times, directions, simple mechanic help, refreshments, restroom facilities and simply, an opportunity to rest and stretch their legs is free and offered at the site.

Additional information given includes:

- Hotel and restaurant listings;
- U.S. Customs regulations for return trip;
- Legitimate nationalization processing business listing;
- Complaint and crime reporting procedures with Mexican Consulate and local agencies;
- Volunteer mechanic on-call to do initial inspection, minor car repairs;
- Mexican immigration regulations and forms;
- Free copies.

All is done with a smile and in Spanish. In fact, to help welcome the paisanos as they stop off at the rest stop will be Laredo’s own Ambassadors, who will be a part of the volunteers providing helpful information and assisting in any way possible to help make their stop at the rest area a pleasant one.

“Laredo welcomes *paisanos*,” said Laredo Mayor Pete Saenz. “We want their experience in Laredo to be positive, restful, and beneficial before they continue into Mexico. We host the *Paisano* Rest Stop to help facilitate their crossing experience here because Laredo, Texas does appreciate the work these Mexican citizens are doing in the United States,” Saenz concluded.

Motorists will see signage and hear radio messages posted from San Antonio on south. Local, state and federal officials patrol the roadside on IH-35 South, to offer assistance to *paisanos* that need help, including security, traffic control, and road side assistance. This year, the exit to the rest stop will be marked with extra signage, especially for those traveling at night or who may not
be familiar with the turn-off to the facility. Motorists who have not stopped before are encouraged to do so before continuing on their journey.

The Texas Department of Transportation is offering the Texas Travel Center, located on the north-bound side of IH-35 at Hwy 83 as an overnight parking facility with restrooms available 24 hours.

“While we will offer this temporary rest stop in conjunction with a variety of services across town, overnight parking is of particular importance because we have traditionally seen our hotels fill to capacity. I encourage all of our travelers to book a hotel reservation early so that they can benefit the most from the stop in Laredo before they continue their journey into Mexico,” said Convention and Visitors Bureau Director Blasita J. Lopez.

_Paisanos_ returning to Mexico through Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas should take Bridge I to avoid traffic congestion along IH-35 at Bridge II. Motorists exit Del Mar Exit #4 to Santa Maria Avenue; follow it south to Bridge I, as they arrive closer to downtown additional signage will be in place routing them through to the international bridge.

Along the alternate route to Bridge I, off of Santa Maria Avenue, portable bathroom facilities at various locations along the route that will be marked with specific Paisano signage. Hours of operation are Friday, December 16 at 12 noon, through 12 noon on Friday, December 26, 2014; Laredo officials have planned to have the facilities available throughout the week leading up to Christmas.

_Paisanos_ wishing to avoid congestion all together can take Colombia Solidarity Bridge (Bridge III) into Nuevo Leon. The extended holiday hours of operation for Bridge III will be: December 16 opening at 8:00 a.m. It will begin operating continuously for 24 hours through midnight, Monday, December 19, 2016 or until all traffic is processed.

For regular AVI motorists who cross daily, there will be a special designated crossing route for them to take to Bridge II, to avoid the downtown _paisano_ and shopping traffic congestion beginning December 15 through December 27, 2016. AVI motorists should take San Eduardo south to Hidalgo, turn west on Hidalgo and then turn south again on the bridge approach.

Local traffic should be aware of the additional holiday traffic in the upcoming days and exercise caution and patience when traveling in the downtown areas and around major retail centers.

Finally, for up to date changes to laws regarding Mexican citizens returning home to Mexico for the holidays and vehicle importation laws, as well as for U.S. or other foreign nationals traveling into Mexico, concerning the documents they must have to facilitate this process, please consult Mexican authorities. For more information, follow the link [http://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/47748/fichero-2016.pdf](http://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/47748/fichero-2016.pdf) which can be downloaded on smart-phones, for up-to-date and accurate information.
Paisanos making the trip through Laredo come from throughout the United States, including Texas, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Oklahoma, New York, North Carolina, and South Carolina, to name a few, citing the welcoming experience as they cross in Laredo and once in Mexico, the safety and ease of travel on the highway through this route.

For more information about the Paisano Rest Stop, Paisanos should call the Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-361-3360, this visitor hot line will be available throughout the 48 hours of the tent operation. They can also visit with CVB staff on social media at Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/welcomepaisanostoLaredo.

Mexican authorities are also on-line at www.gob.mx/inm or social media Facebook & Twitter @programapaisano and finally, on Google at +programapaisano. A special map application to route Paisanos to their destination can be found at ttr.sct.gob.mx/mappir.

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