

City of Laredo 2015 Washington D.C. Legislative Advocacy Trip Recap

AIRPORT

- Federal Aviation Administration, Air Traffic Organization
CONTACT: Vaughn Turner and Brian Langdon
- Regarding the Instrument Landing System (ILS), FAA representatives indicated that the ILS was recently rehabilitated and that it is back in service and its reliability improved.
- Regarding the Automated Weather Information System (AWIS), FAA recently replaced the AWIS computers and back in service.
- Regarding the Air Traffic Control Tower, the FAA indicated that deficiencies note by OSHA inspection of the tower will be corrected within the next 60-days.
- These items were the focus of meeting with FAA ATO.
- However, Airport Staff is working with FAA Airports Division for grant funding to undertake several projects this FY 2015. We anticipate an FAA grant once bids are received.

PLANNING: TRANSPORTATION

Federal Rail Administration and Federal Highway Administration

- Major topics centered around the adverse effects increased rail and commercial traffic create.
- Agency representatives for the Federal Rail and Department of Transportation advised that there is a lack of federal funding to assist communities that are adversely affected by increased rail and commercial vehicle traffic.
- NOTE: Possible funding opportunities are TIGER grants which become available periodically, but to be competitive, projects must be designed and shovel ready.

COMMUNITY:

National Endowment for the Arts

Laura de la Torre, Congressional Liaison

Meeting attended by Planning and Zoning Director Nathan Bratton with Frank and Viviana Rotnofsky

- NEA outlined various programs and grants that could be available, on a dollar for dollar matching basis. Ms. de la Torre explained to the group that funds could be used for some of the components of restoring the Plaza Theater, depending on the organizations that were partnering, and on various art activities within the community.

- Two specific matching grant programs were identified, the “Our Town” grant and the “Challenge America” grant. Ms. De la Torre encouraged the group to submit project for funding to both grant programs.

BRIDGE

General Services Administration

U.S. Department of State

- The City was able to obtain authorization (executed Revocable License) to construct the Hazardous Material Offsite Containment Facility in GSA (Port of Entry) property.
 - By obtaining this authorization, the City is one step closer in compliance with the Department of State to allow the crossings of Hazardous Material cargo through the World Trade Bridge.
- The City placed an item for the March 16th City Council Meeting to award the construction contract for the Hazardous Material Offsite Containment Facility.
- GSA was not able to provide a status on the Bridge I (Convent POE) or Bridge II (Juarez/Lincoln POE) Modification project since the project is currently in the procurement process. GSA indicated that they will provide the City a update in 120 days

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Office of Mexican Affairs for the US Department of State

Contact: Robin H. Matthewman, Director
Cameron D. McGlothlin, Border Affair Officer
Steve Kameny, Border Affair officer

- Issues discussed related to the Low Water Weir Project for the Rio Grande River, and binational environmental outreach education.
 - Outcome: We need to provide a letter of support from Mexico for funding regarding the low water weir project, phase-2 about \$2.7million through International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC).

US Army Corps of Engineers:

Contact: Sandy Gore, Deputy Chief, Southwestern Division

- Discussed the Chacon Creek feasibility study project and the River bend Ecosystem restoration project.
 - Outcome: City of Laredo will be able to finish the Chacon creek study which is stalled due to the authorization by the congress. The study is about 95% complete and now needs to be updated for the environmental and economic impact. The study will provide possible future funding for floodplain management about \$25-\$30 million through Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The River bend project is scheduled for bidding in late summer 2015 at a cost of \$6. With land matching (\$2.0 million) from the city.

Department of Energy:

Contact: Clay Middleton

- The discussion included the Energy Efficiency projects and landfill waste to energy.

- Outcome: The President's budget includes grants for local government directly not through state. Being the successful program implementation of the previous grants and Councils commitment through the Chevron project, Laredo will have a better advantage of multimillion dollar grants once congress approves the budget.

Economic Development Administration (EDA):

Contact: Dr. Barrett Haga, Senior Specialist
Gabriela Morales, Business development Specialist

- Discussed the potential grant opportunity for the River Vega Parking lot project.
 - Outcome: The meeting was a great insight about how EDA review the grant applications. City will be better prepared to apply for a grant of \$1.5-\$3.0 million in June 2015.
 - District V Council Member Roque Vela, Jr was invited to participate in the Americas Competitiveness Exchange on Innovation and Entrepreneurship Conference of U.S. Department of Commerce officials, City leaders and private sector from throughout the nation. The team will visit different cities on successful examples of investment and public-private partnerships. Only six persons are selected to participate.

US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Contact: Mark Rupp, Deputy Associate Administrator, office of intergovernmental relations
Anita Hannon, Intergovernmental Liaison

Outcome: Possible grant opportunity in the amount up to \$5.0 million through brownfields revolving loan program for the former Mercy Hospital.

FIRE

- Visited the Department of Commerce to discuss the Weather Radar. They advised that the Weather Service was adding a satellite weather detection system that would improve forecasting abilities by March 2016. As far as adding the radar we requested, they indicated that they would continue to keep it in mind as funding may become available through the government budget allocations.
- SAFER grant discussion with FEMA went well. They offered tips in key language that they typically like to see in grant submittals. Grant was submitted yesterday for 18 new positions. Also requested for City of Laredo to be considered to sit on the grant review board.

POLICE

- ATF- Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms agreed that both agencies to continue in supporting the safety of Laredo community and the LPD Bomb Investigation Unit.
- ICE -Immigration Custom Enforcement- agreed to sharing of intelligence and continue the financial support of assigned LPD Task Force officers.

- DOJ- Department of Justice- guidance to grants for technology and equipment. Also, displayed support for LPD's application grants on Violence Against Women and Anti-juvenile Gang Task Force.
- COPS- Community Oriented Policing- discussed grants for equipment and personnel. LPD is applying for 6 police positions to form a west side Problem Oriented Policing unit.

HEALTH

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Office of the Secretary U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Contact: Maria Julia Marinissen, Ph.D., Director
Division of International Health Security, Office of Policy and Planning
Diane DiEuliis, Ph.D, Acting Director, Office of Policy and Planning

- Issues discussed funding for disease control, surveillance, testing, training, and preparedness for any public health threat.
 - Outcome: Revisit with the Texas Department of State Health Services on the Laboratory Response Network designation along with funding for operations and staff (\$300,000/year) and to assure monitoring resources for surveillance, along with food security.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Contact: Gregorio Hunt, Policy Advisor Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs
Cristina Rabadan-Diehl Ph.D, MPH, Director Office of the Americas (US/Mexico Border Health Commission

- Outcome: We will continue the dialogue and share resources and technical assistance for new resources

United States Food Drug Administration

Contact: Daniel Lukash, Contract Specialist and Gregory Bergg

- Outcome: Although no funds are available at this time, they provided guidance on potential new funding on the horizon. Our local initiatives were commended.

United States Department of Agriculture

Contact: Jennifer Yezak, Acting Deputy Chief of Staff, Director of External and Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Secretary

- Outcome: \$300,000 for remodeling of the former Santo Niño Clinic for Women Infants and Children's Program Services (WIC) is being requested in lieu of lease funds being appropriated at the current time. Both the State of Texas and US Agriculture are reviewing.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Contact: Kirk E. James, M.D. Medical Officer Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
Division of Services Improvement, Health Systems Branch

- Outcome: Continued funding for 3 years.

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Contact: Mark Rupp, Director Office of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Administrator

- Outcome: They provided guidance on potential funding and assured a continued working relationship. Specifically, they compliment on Laredo's energy conservation efforts, green space, and tire and bag ordinance.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

U.S. Housing and Urban Development

Contact: Elva Garcia, CPD Director HUD San Antonio Office.
Joined by Juan Sanchez from Congressman Cuellar's Office

- Discussed various housing needs in our community.
 - Outcome: They provided information on several programs that City may be eligible to apply for including the new choice program, they provided information on Colonias and recommended programs be reviewed to determine possible eligible funding opportunities for the community.

Austin Legislative Trip

Parks and Leisure Department-Osbaldo Guzman

- 80/20 match
- Trails for Independence Hills
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Grant

Environmental Department–Riazul Mia

- From EDA - the possibility of a \$1.5 million for the parking structure at Downtown.
- From DPS- the closure of \$3.7 million grant under Hazard mitigation program.
- TCEQ- support for the Tire legislation.
- State Energy conservation office (SECO) - possible loan to buy CNG buses & Garbage Trucks. Also, the visits to our legislators about different issues the community is facing. Thanks.

Health Department –Dr. Hector Gonzalez

Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

- Potential to approve Laboratory Response Network (LRN) designation to locally test any biological threat at the health department biosafety lab III
- Laredo will be included in future funding formula development for Tuberculosis and Immunizations
- Recognized for best practices in disease self-management
- Recognized for best practice in Nurse Family Partnership
- Commitment for at least level funding if not more based on threat and in lieu of consolidation

Cancer Research Institute of Texas

- Recognized for best practice in prevention, early screening and diagnostic confirmation in breast, cervical and colon cancer detection
- Encouraged to apply for new grants because of significant disparity

DPS

- Recognizes that border security also means health security and will continue to work with law enforcement and to assure border security with locals

Senator Zaffirini

- Endorsed the tire ordinance and is working with Senator Rodriguez to introduce bill that will prohibit anyone who buys tires to keep their olds ones to prevent illegal dumping and safe guarding the environment and health
- Will review state statue on accessible parking space and accessible parking designation
- Will follow-up with DSHS on the Laboratory response network (LRN) designation

Senator Estes vice chair Health and human services, environmental resources and economic development

- Will come to Laredo to assess our economic development projects (such as the outlet mall), assess or solid waste management methane gas generated energy and our best practices in primary care and disease self-management integration and prevention sustainment.

Senator Birdwell, Chair of the Border Security Subcommittee

- Confirmed will work with Laredo and locals on border security plan, his staff will follow-up with LPD, FD and Health to assure law enforcement and health security

Representative Raymond

- Has asked for update from the Deputy Commissioner Chris Traylor HHSC and Deputy Commissioner Kirk Cole, Asst. on the LAB LRN.
- Also asked Commissioner Jana Zumbrun (TB/HIV/STD, Immunizations, Chronic Disease Management and LAB), Asst. Commissioner David Gruber (public health preparedness and health care hospital preparedness) DSHS on lab LRN designation, resources support for prevention and disease control.

- Supports the tire bill that will be presented by Senator Rodriguez and Zaffirini and will work on the house side to pass it.
- Supports designated funding for border health based on threat
- Chief of staff will follow-up with Dr. Gonzalez on accessible parking.
- Supports and has asked DSHS to assess and provide response on partner funding for a WIC Healthy Learning Center in South Laredo.

Land Commissioner George P. Bush

- Promised to try and bring next energy forum meeting to Laredo and to work with Laredo on local issues around gas and oil development and will assess how can improve Veterans health care locally is invited to come to Laredo.

Secretary of State Carlos Cascos

- Said will work with locals along the border for resources and promote safety of the border, his chief of staff will follow-up with Dr. Gonzalez on border health issues.

Fire Department –Chief Steve Landin

- Possible STDC funding for radio equipment and interoperability. As a result of the meeting with Steve McCraw.
- Discussion for additional equipment for EOC. Steve McCraw.

Transit –Claudia San Miguel

January 28, 2015
 Texas Department of Transportation
 Public Transportation Division

Meeting Attendees:

- Eric L. Gleason, Director Public Transportation Division
- Bobby Killebrew, Deputy Director Public Transportation Division
- Kelly Kirkland Director Planning and Support Section, Public Transportation Division
- Donna Roberts, Section Director Program Services, Public Transportation Division

- Council Member Esteban Rangel
- Jesus Olivares, Interim City Manager
- Claudia San Miguel, Acting General Manager Joel Vasquez, CVB

Implement Capital Program to Replace Aging Transit Fleet

- Staff shared ridership statics whereas El Metro transports over 3.1 million passengers a year; we accomplish this under challenging conditions for El Metro fix route fleet consists of 48 buses of which 20 have met their life expectancy.
- The City of Laredo Transit System is seeking assistance to replace transit buses that surpassed their life expectancy; the most expected outcome of the replacement, other than providing better transportation services is the improvement of the operation costs.
- Gleason regretfully confirmed that under the new FTA designation of Laredo as a “Large Urbanized Area” (under 2010 Census), the City of Laredo Transit System will not be eligible for the upcoming Vehicle Replacement Program Competitive Grant of \$20 million dollars.
- On a positive note, Mr. Gleason committed to assist and support the City in Laredo to obtain Transportation Development Credits; this program is a financing tool approved by the Federal Highway Administration that allows states to use federal obligation authority without the requirement of providing matching dollars.
- Staff requested for Mr. Gleason to consider the approval of a budget change for the New Freedom Grant balance fund to be used to purchase vans to improve our Para-transit (El Lift) program. The El Lift currently services over 1000 registered (ADA Eligible) passengers with an average of 25 new customers registering every month. This would represent an estimated increase of 25% by the end of 2015. With the budget change approval El Lift would be able to acquire 3 additional ADA vans.
- Mr. Gleason confirmed that said approval is feasible and asked for Staff to submit the letter requesting the change; he was positive and optimistic that said request will be approved.
- As program becomes available, Mr. Gleason and Mr. Killebrew committed to continue and work with the City of Laredo Transit Department Staff, and to provide guidance to successfully apply for additional funding opportunities.

Planning and Zoning Department –Nathan Bratton

- Loop 20/I 69 corridor was discussed and TXDOT is in agreement to move forward and bring it to interstate standards.

TABC

- Discussion on various efforts regarding compliance with City and State regulations for establishments serving food and beverage. Reinforced need for TABC regulation in city.

I would like to clarify a report I made to the Laredo Morning Times yesterday with reference to acquiring one million dollars from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. There are two applications before the TDHCA for the low income tax credits program. The applications are currently undergoing review.

We also met with officials of the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration and they invited us to apply for a \$1.5 million dollar grant for parking facilities for our downtown area. We believe the City of Laredo stands a very good chance of obtaining the grant. Everyone knows we need more parking in our downtown area.