

**STATEMENT OF
LURITA DOAN
ADMINISTRATOR OF
GENERAL SERVICES
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
DECEMBER 15, 2007**



Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Minority Member King, members of the committee and Congressman Reyes. I am Lurita Doan, the Administrator of General Services at the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). I am pleased to be back here in El Paso with the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the challenges facing our Nation's ports of entry: the challenges of ensuring homeland security while facilitating the free flow of legitimate trade and travel. Toward that end, I will be discussing GSA's role in the planning, construction, renovation and maintenance of our Nation's Land Ports of Entry (LPOE). GSA has the primary responsibility for designing, building, and maintaining our nation's ports of entry, but we do not hold a monopoly on good ideas.

Reasserting GSA's leadership role in building capacity at LPOE's

As you well know, there is an urgent need in the nation to rethink the way we plan, design and build our ports of entry. We need new energy and new ideas. Over the past 15 years or so, our trade across the borders has dramatically increased while the capacity of our LPOEs to handle this new traffic has not kept pace. To solve this problem, we are going to have to think differently.

As GSA Administrator, I am always on the look-out for best practices in solving complex problems. As an Administrator who views government through the eyes of an unabashed entrepreneur, I have admitted that I think GSA has been too timid in leading the effort to design and build additional capacity at our LPOEs. We should be bolder in setting an ambitious agenda. The American people are counting on us.

I have committed GSA to more boldly assume the leadership role to better design, build, expand, and maintain our Nation's LPOEs. Our goal is simple: to expand capacity and build new facilities where they are needed most, in a timely manner. The days of performing yet another study to tell us that we have a congested border are over. I have retooled our Border Ports of Entry team at GSA to allow for good ideas to come from people working and living along the borders. Not all good ideas emanate out of Washington. I have heard some great ideas and solutions from GSA's people who are in the field and work at the ports of entry every day.

GSA clearly understands the importance of, and is committed to, actively working with all key agencies, to build the best LPOEs for the safety of the United States and which support legitimate free trade. GSA is an active member of the Border Facilitation Working Group (BFWG).

The role of the BFWG is to define and analyze critical border facilitation issues and develop policy proposals for consideration by the entire Border and Transportation Security Policy Coordination Committee. The working group recommends improvements in existing interagency practices, coordination and execution of U.S. Border facilitation plans and policies, activities and initiatives. The BFWG addresses issues at the Federal, State, local, tribal and international levels in order to ensure interagency integration and alignment. The BFWG has visited several of our critical

LPOEs to observe the processes, (including the El Paso LPOEs on December 4th) discuss issues or areas of concern at the borders, as well as discuss successes and share "best practices" of borders. The BFWG meets with CBP Officers and with the local officials and community stakeholders, on both sides of a shared border, to discuss issues and concerns.

To be sure, federal money is an important resource. But I am eager also to explore other innovative financing that would help us build more capacity without always depending upon federal funding. Nogales proved that when there is a strong business case, the private sector is willing and able to participate.

Our borders present complex real estate challenges. We have many stakeholders, all of whom know there is not one silver-bullet solution that can provide for security and, simultaneously, the free flow of trade across all 6,900 miles -- especially not if you have ever been to the border, as I have, and have seen how different the challenges are: Houlton is not El Paso, Pembina is not Andrade, Blaine is not Lukeville, Detroit is not San Ysidro.

CBP is one of our most important customer agencies, and we support their mission to keep our borders safe from those who wish to do harm to the United States while also maintaining open commerce and trade with all of our international partners. Today I'd like to talk about:

- 1) How GSA is reasserting its leadership role in building increased capacity at ports of entry;
- 2) Our national LPOE portfolio as well as current projects and initiatives in the El Paso area;
- 3) What we are doing to streamline our processes and expedite project delivery as well as explore alternative financing; and
- 4) Our community outreach efforts.

Land Port of Entry Portfolio and Projects in the El Paso Area

There are 163 LPOEs along the Northern and Southern borders encompassing more than 1,900 miles between the United States and Mexico and over 5,000 miles between the U.S. and Canada. One hundred twenty (120) of these ports, approximately 75%, are either government-owned or -leased border inspection facilities under the jurisdiction and control of GSA as the primary service provider to CBP. The remaining 43 are under the jurisdiction and control of the Department of Homeland Security.

Approximately 20 years ago, there was a major border crossing improvement program along the southern border. From 1987 until 1996, GSA spent more than \$350 million to expedite trade and traffic across the border. Nearly \$50 million was spent on the

LPOEs in the El Paso area. At that time, everyone anticipated that the investment would not only prepare the border for the increased cross border activity resulting from NAFTA, but would actually handle the increased traffic for the next twenty years. I doubt that many in this room would have predicted that less than 15 years later, all of these ports of entry would have reached their capacity. Today, five new LPOEs have been authorized for design or construction or both. Four of those are along the southern border, including the Tornillo-Guadalupe project here in El Paso County.

Currently, there are six LPOEs here in the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization's area: Paso del Norte, Stanton Street, the Bridge of the Americas, Ysleta, Fabens, and Santa Teresa, NM. These ports are important to the flow of our international commerce, and are vital to the region's trans-border economy and an important link in the area's transportation system.

The El Paso-Juarez metropolitan area represents one of, if not the, largest border community in the world, with a combined population of over two million people. We expect to see a large percentage growth in Dona Ana and El Paso Counties between 2005 and 2025 (35% and 27%, respectively). This growth in El Paso will likely have a direct impact on traffic levels at the El Paso LPOEs at Paso del Norte, Bridge of the Americas, Stanton Street and Ysleta.

The City of Ciudad Juarez, which accounted for 41% of the State of Chihuahua's total population in 2005, is undergoing substantial population growth as well. As a growing number of Mexican citizens move north searching for jobs and higher wages, they are arriving in Ciudad Juarez at a rapid rate. As a result, Ciudad Juarez is expected to grow by 57% between 2005 and 2025.

GSA has a long history of partnering closely with the City of El Paso, El Paso County, the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) and others in the delivery of port of entry projects in the El Paso area. I would like to share some of those success stories with you today.

In 1998, with the support of the local community and TXDOT, \$2.4 million was transferred to GSA from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the addition of four inspection lanes and the renovation of the secondary inspection area at the Bridge of the Americas Port of Entry. The remainder of the funding came from GSA, the U.S. Customs Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of Agriculture. As a result, over 7.6 million vehicles and nearly 385,000 trucks were inspected there in 2005. It was a classic example that shows how successful a project can be when the city, state and Federal governments all work together.

In 2001, the local community supported the transfer of \$1 million from TXDOT for the expansion of lanes at the Paso del Norte Port of Entry. That funding, along with \$1.2 million of Federal appropriations that Chairman Reyes helped us obtain, provided the necessary design funding for the project now underway. The project will renovate and

expand the administration building, expand the pedestrian processing area from eight lanes to fourteen lanes, and will add two new vehicle inspection lanes. In 2005, over 3.5 million vehicles, 2,600 buses and 6.5 million pedestrians were inspected at this port, and we expect the expanded inspection facilities to further increase these numbers. This project is planned for completion in summer 2009.

In December 2006, GSA awarded the construction project for the expansion of the Ysleta Port of Entry. This project will increase the number of commercial inspection lanes, promote the expanded use of Free and Secure Trade (FAST) lanes by pre-enrolled commercial vehicles, and allow for direct truck access to the Texas vehicle inspection facility without entering or crossing city streets. In addition, TXDOT is making significant road improvements to remove bottlenecks for trucks exiting the port. This project is scheduled for completion in late 2008.

Pending Congressional appropriation of funds in fiscal year 2008, GSA plans to proceed with the design of the new LPOE at Tornillo. This new crossing is sponsored by the County of El Paso and will replace the current two lane wooden bridge. GSA has worked closely with the County for the last 10 years to get to this stage. The County will be donating over 110 acres of land along with providing utilities to the site. This LPOE will serve both passenger and commercial vehicles.

In spite of all of these ongoing projects, there continues to be concerns about wait times at the El Paso crossings. At CBP's request, GSA has initiated a feasibility study to look at the expansion capabilities at the Bridge of the Americas. As we saw earlier today, the port is essentially boxed in since it is surrounded by highway infrastructure on three sides and a National Park on the other side.

Streamlined processes and project delivery

As mentioned in the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) November 5, 2007 Report on Border Security,¹ and in the GAO's November 13 testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs,² the current delivery time for GSA to design and deliver LPOEs for CBP is approximately seven years. In an effort to deal with CBP's growing need since September 11th, our two agencies have been working closely together for the past year to find ways to streamline the cost and time required to develop, deliver, and maintain CBP facilities while meeting its mission requirements. One of the key things we've been doing in conjunction with CBP is reviewing GSA's current project delivery methods and implementing new streamlined project delivery methods whenever possible.

Consolidated management and funding of key pre-design and acquisition phases

¹ United States Government Accountability Office Report entitled, "Border Security; Despite Progress Weaknesses in Traveler Inspections Exist at Our Nation's Ports of Entry," GSA -08-218 (Nov. 5, 2007).

² GAO Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia,, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, GAO-08-192T (Nov. 13, 2007)

In an effort to establish a consistent approach in LPOE pre-design, design and acquisition, GSA recently consolidated the procurement and funding of commonly used services. These include feasibility studies, project design and special services.

One of the first steps before designing any project, including LPOEs, is to undertake a feasibility study. This serves as the planning document offering alternatives for site layout, building locations, land acquisition strategy, and traffic flow patterns. It identifies any environmental issues, establishes the project schedule, provides cost estimates, and outlines procurement and funding strategies. In the past, each region of the country used its own contracting vehicles, which sometimes resulted in inexperienced architect-engineer firms who were unfamiliar with the complexities of working on the border. To establish consistency and provide a quality product, GSA held a competition for a national services contract for these border station feasibility studies. The selected architect and engineering firms have undergone training from our regional and national offices to provide them a clear understanding of the GSA/CBP mission, objectives, and priorities.

We have also done a similar competition for the selection of design firms, which will provide a more consistent level of quality design. By having a group of architectural and engineering firms that have already been vetted through a national competition, the time to conduct the procurement process can be reduced by up to five months.

Improve project cost estimation

In today's difficult construction market with the price of materials and labor rates skyrocketing, particularly in markets like El Paso, GSA has been working on ways to incorporate trend analysis to identify recurrent costs across our real estate portfolio. This allows us to aggregate certain costs to gain efficiencies where possible. GSA is also aligning material and labor factors to local markets, while continuously comparing the accuracy of project estimates with key project or funding process milestones. This will improve the ability of our people to estimate project costs and cut down on the need to return to Congress and seek additional funding on projects, thus causing project delays.

Institute a formal project approval and change management process

GSA, in partnership with CBP, is currently implementing and coordinating a formal change management process throughout all of the project delivery phases. This is to make sure that all of the project's stakeholders are aware and have approval, as necessary, of any project changes that could affect scope, schedule and cost.

Adopt a systems approach to facility design and development

In the past, for each LPOE project, the design firm would develop a new design for all of the LPOE components. In an effort to reduce design time from two years to one, GSA and CBP identified standardized components of LPOE facilities that can be applied in designs nationwide. These components include: lane systems, canopy cable trays, inspection booths, processing counters, holding cells, secondary inspection buildings, and non-invasive inspection buildings. This creation of an "LPOE Design Kit" of

construction details will greatly streamline assembly of a project's construction documents and assist throughout construction phases. For smaller, more remote ports with similar profiles, primarily on the Northern Border, GSA will also utilize LPOE prototypical building designs, where appropriate.

Streamlining the Presidential permitting process

In his Constitutional role to conduct the foreign relations of the United States, in 1968, the President issued Executive Order (EO) 11423 authorizing the Secretary of State to issue Presidential permits for the construction of facilities crossing our international borders. In 2004, President Bush issued E.O. 13337 clarifying that the Presidential Permitting process applied to all new border crossings as well as to substantial modifications to existing crossings. Over the past couple of years, GSA has worked closely with other Federal agencies in the development of guidelines for the implementation of E.O. 13337, regarding the application for Presidential Permits. As a result of the collaborative efforts of the Department of State, the Federal Highway Administration, CBP and GSA, earlier this year the Department of State issued implementing guidelines that alleviate the need for applying for a Presidential Permit for modification of inspection facilities projects that do not have a substantial impact on the actual crossing or the operations in the adjacent country. These efforts have significantly streamlined the Presidential Permitting process. But the next step is to be sure that the interpretation of the guidelines is communicated to all within the organization and adopted nationwide.

So, while all new crossings and any proposed substantial change to a crossing that is expected to have a material impact on either Canada or Mexico (for example the closing of a crossing or permanently changing the physical capacity of the crossing) will still require a Presidential Permit, many of GSA's routine renovations, infrastructure improvements, and interior changes to existing border inspection facilities will not require a Permit. GSA appreciates the Department of State's willingness to work with the interagency working group to develop and issue these new guidelines.

Community Outreach

As I mentioned earlier, GSA tries to engage the local communities as early as possible when beginning new projects. Over the past year, our Regional and National offices have worked diligently to reach out to the community stakeholders in El Paso. I have also personally toured the ports here in El Paso, along with David Winstead, the Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service, and we are committed to continuing a dialogue as these projects move forward. As a result of our outreach efforts, community groups have had the opportunity to discuss issues with our leadership. The community has brought a variety of proposals and solutions to our attention with the mutual benefit of expediting projects while minimizing the impact on the citizens of El Paso. Our next step is to execute on these efforts.

We recognize the importance of including the local community throughout the process and we value its contribution. We will continue to strive for open and meaningful

communication. While the long term benefits of projects of this scope are easy to recognize, we also understand the adverse short term effects on the local economy as traffic is diverted and wait times increase during the construction period. To avoid such effects, we are committed to open dialogue between and among the stakeholders, as we are doing now by providing weekly updates on our Paso del Norte project to Chairman Reyes and Mayor Cook, so that they can share the information with their interested constituents.

Conclusion

Securing the nation's borders is critical in preventing terrorists, illegal drugs or harmful products or produce from entering the country, but we must also facilitate the movement of legitimate international travel and trade in the form of the millions of travelers and billions of dollars in commercial goods that pass through our LPOEs every year. Due to the critical importance of these border inspection facilities to our nation's security, it is imperative for GSA to continue to make the best possible effort to provide and maintain border crossings and border inspection facilities that can most effectively and efficiently handle the increased demands and future growth of border security and flow of traffic and trade.

Mr. Chairman this concludes my formal statement. I look forward to continuing our discussion with you and members of the Committee on our continued efforts to build increased capacity and infrastructure at our Nation's borders.

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