

STATEMENT OF
MR. MICHAEL GELBER
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE
U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE ON
BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY
“Keeping Pace with Trade, Travel, and Security: How Does CBP Prioritize and Improve
Staffing and Infrastructure?”

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Introduction

Good morning Chairman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Michael Gelber, and I am Deputy Commissioner of the U.S. General Services Administration’s (GSA) Public Buildings Service. Thank you for inviting me to this hearing on prioritizing and improving the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) facility infrastructure.

GSA’s mission is to deliver the best value in real estate, acquisition, and technology services to government and the American people. As part of this mission, GSA maintains a close partnership with CBP to meet that agency’s space needs along our Nation’s borders. CBP is our primary partner among the Federal inspection agencies stationed along America’s land borders.

I look forward to describing how GSA partners with CBP concerning how the Federal Government prioritizes and executes land port projects to improve security, trade, and economic opportunities.

GSA’s Ongoing Partnership with CBP

GSA works closely with CBP to design, construct, maintain, and operate land ports of entry along more than 1,900 miles of border between the United States and Mexico and more than 5,500 miles of border between the United States and Canada. These ports are critical to the Nation’s trade and security.

On a daily basis, approximately 380,000 people cross the U.S.-Canada border. From 2000 to 2014, the combined value of trade between the U.S. and Canada and the U.S. and Mexico via surface transport increased by over 80 percent, from \$546 billion in 2000 to \$987 billion in 2014. Safe, secure, and modern land ports along our borders are critical to ensuring an efficient flow of commerce and people that support American jobs and economic growth.

Of the 167 land ports of entry (LPOEs) along the U.S. borders, GSA manages 124, of which the Government owns or partially owns 102. GSA’s land ports of entry encompass more than 5.5

million square feet of space. Additionally, CBP owns and operates 40 primarily smaller locations, mostly in remote, rural areas. The Department of Agriculture owns one land port of entry, and the Department of the Interior - National Park Service owns two ports.

Given the importance of these land ports of entry, GSA, in collaboration with CBP, prioritizes investment to modernize and upgrade these ports. To ensure these investments address CBP's highest priority needs, GSA relies on the priorities established with CBP's in the planning process for portfolio upgrades. CBP employs a multi-step process to develop its plan. This list of priorities can include expansion and modernization of existing land ports along with new port construction.

CBP's process includes gathering data through a Strategic Resource Assessment planning progress, scoring identified needs at each port, conducting a sensitivity analysis on the initial ranking of needs, assessing project feasibility and risk, and establishing an executable capital investment plan.

Over the past 16 years, GSA has invested more than \$1.8 billion from the Federal Buildings Fund to deliver more than 20 new land ports along our northern and southern borders. Since 2013, GSA has requested over \$1 billion in support of land port modernization, including GSA's FY2017 request of \$248,213,000 to reconfigure and expand the land port of entry in Calexico, California, and \$5,749,000 for design and construction of a new animal inspection facility for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service at the Pembina, North Dakota land port of entry. Of these requests, Congress has provided approximately \$700 million.

Without the full funding requested in the President's annual budget, GSA cannot execute the land port upgrades that are critically needed. GSA works with CBP to execute the projects that received enacted appropriations.

Land Port Prioritization

CBP and GSA consult with stakeholder agencies at the onset of project planning and continue this relationship throughout project development and execution. If a project involves a new border crossing and or a substantial modification of an existing crossing, GSA works closely with the Department of State, which must determine whether the project is in the national interest justifying issuance of a Presidential Permit. GSA also works closely with the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the transportation departments from the 15 border states when planning border infrastructure projects.

CBP and GSA are partners in the border master planning process on the U.S. - Mexico border. In addition to coordination with state and local agencies, the border master planning process also includes Mexican federal, state and local government entities as well as other Federal agencies including State Department, DOT (FHWA, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, etc.) and sometimes private partners as well (railroads, for example). The resulting Border Master Plan is a listing of project priorities that state and local governments rank regionally and provide guidance to help CBP and GSA rank projects nationally.

With respect to land ports at the northern border, GSA works closely with the Department of State to coordinate with government offices at all levels in Canada.

Improving Land Ports of Entry

GSA has also seen significant interest in finding funding alternatives to direct federal appropriations to support the delivery of high-priority land port projects. One tool for supporting Federal efforts is the Section 559 Donation Acceptance Program (DAP), which authorizes GSA and CBP to receive donations and reimbursable services for land port of entry projects.

Under this program, projects are being further assessed and developed in the Cities of Donna, El Paso, and Pharr, Texas. In Donna, for example, GSA and CBP have helped the City complete concept development; while in El Paso and Pharr, port of entry modernization projects are in the concept development phase.

GSA and CBP are currently in the process of reviewing DAP fiscal year 2016 proposals, which may provide additional investment in, and expedition of, infrastructure and technology improvements at ports of entry.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about GSA's ongoing partnership with CBP to improve the Nation's infrastructure along America's borders. I welcome the opportunity to discuss GSA's commitment to strategic investment in the Nation's land ports of entry, and am happy to answer any questions you may have.