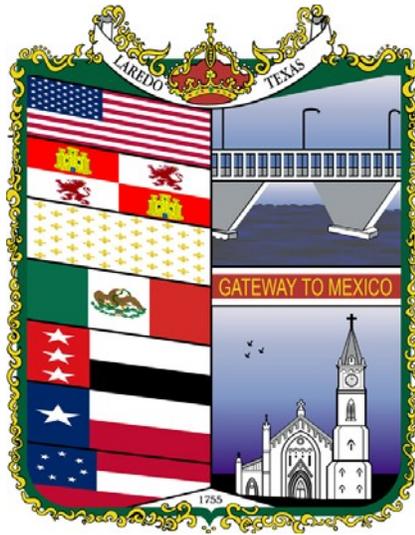


2017
CITY OF LAREDO
STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



85TH LEGISLATURE
STATE OF TEXAS

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL ON
DECEMBER 5, 2016

**2017 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

HEALTH

Designate a Public Health Regional Fund to Support Public Health, Surveillance and Security for the Texas-Mexico Border4
Funding for Obesity Reduction and Diabetes Risk Reduction 6
Funding for Residency Program in Laredo..... 8
Laboratory Response Network Certification 9
Promote Healthy Food Choices in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.... 10
Re-Initiate Tire Remediation Program 12

HOMELAND SECURITY

Change Threat vs. Population Based on Funding Formulas..... 15
Funding for Border Region Behavioral Health Center 16
Funding for Radio Communications and Interoperability 18
Funding for Regional Radio Communications Center 20

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Coin Operated Machine Businesses..... 23
Rebate on State Occupancy Tax for a Proposed Convention Center/Hotel in Laredo, Texas.....25

TRANSIT

Implement Capital Program to Replace Aging Transit Fleet.....27

TRANSPORTATION

Dedication Aviation Sales Tax Revenue for Airport Development30
Hachar-Reuthinger Parkway/Highway Mines Road IH-35
(At Approx. Mile Marker 15).....31
U.S. 59/Future I-69 W Corridor (US 59/US 59 Business to Havana)32
World Trade Bridge Fast Lane Additional Bridge Lanes Additional Exit
Booths "Weigh-In Motion" System.....33

Health

Designate a Public Health Regional Fund to Support Public Health, Surveillance and Security for the Texas-Mexico Border

PROPOSAL

Establish a State Designated Texas-Mexico Border Public Health Fund to address core public health services and public health emergency response and preparedness for this region addressing the cross jurisdictional and international potential health threat. This is especially important; since public health, current, emerging and new disease threat level on the Texas/Mexico Border is at an all-time high, if not the highest!

BACKGROUND

Public Health disease control, prevention, regulatory services, emergency response (preparedness) and border health security is needed to ensure the health and safety of Texans. The increased role in prevention, early detection, disease control, preparedness response and interagency collaboration is critically important. Therefore, through the years the City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD), Cameron County Health and Human Services, Hidalgo County Health and Human Services and El Paso City County Health and the Texas Department of State Health Services have partnered to safeguard against disease entry into Texas. We are ready and prepared to enhance core public health services and public health emergency preparedness to keep our communities, the region, Texas, the nation and the cross jurisdictional international region safe from bioterrorism, new public health threats and all hazardous threats. The Region geographically is located in a high-risk area for disease and public health threats due to our binational and international vulnerability to threats of diseases which if not contained on the Texas/Mexico Border; have the potential of multiplying throughout the State of Texas and the nation. To compound matters, many sectors of our Texas/Mexico Border remain underserved and lack adequate resources for response and containment yet for many, public health continues to serve as the medical home for preventive primary care, maternal child health services, immunizations and dental care adding significantly to our responsibility in core public health services (disease control, surveillance, wellness and prevention and public health emergency response). Consequently the role of Public Health on the Texas/Mexico Border is that of health care delivery, public health disease control and public health homeland security.

Historically, resources have not been provided equitably and as a result, additional support as a border region for core public health services is needed in particular for: 1). disease control (epidemiology, surveillance, disease investigation and intervention); 2). environmental health (food management, prevention and enforcement as well vector control and zoonosis); 3). prevention and health promotion, especially nutrition; 4). laboratory testing for early detection and confirmation and 5). communications. This can be accomplished through a special public health regional fund. Local health departments are bearing more of the local response with local resources for core public health services and continue to provide services for those regional areas without local public health support. For the state's safety we must maintain international border public health readiness for prevention, surveillance and safety. Today public health response to disease control, disaster management, foodborne disease management and enforcement (important due to illegal food entry and selling) is even more important. Local health departments along the Texas-Mexico border are currently providing over 80% of the public health services. Core public services are being met but have become overwhelming and additional new resources are needed by local health

departments.

The CLHD is requesting this funding for Public Health Readiness and Response along the

Texas-Mexico Border at least with an additional \$200,000 per health department per year for the biennium (\$800,000) to conduct:

Disease Control, Prevention and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Activities:

1. Maintain surveillance, detection, disease control and food safety/enforcement services that will be accomplished by appropriate staff (epidemiologist, sanitarians and senior laboratory). These persons will evaluate, monitor, investigate, enforce, test and take preventive and disease control measures on communicable diseases (in particular Tuberculosis, HIV, vaccine preventable), all public health threats, zoonotic, vector borne and food borne disease as well other emerging and new threats such as environmental exposures and their co-morbidities (Chikungunya V).
2. Maintain Border Health security by enhancing Texas//Mexico border health security services and partnerships for epidemiology, surveillance, public health risk reduction, communication and testing. Continue prevention and detection training (i.e. infectious disease, disease detection and chronic disease management) in collaboration and coordination with local and Binational partners. These public health emergency response activities will ensure rapid communications, interventions, mitigation and prevention of all hazards threats.

CONTACT

Dr. Hector Gonzalez

Health Director

2600 Cedar St.

Laredo, Texas 78040

Phone: (956) 795-4901

Fax: (956) 729-2632

Email: hgonzalez@ci.laredo.tx.us

Funding for Obesity Reduction and Diabetes Risk Reduction

PROPOSAL

Past legislation (HB3618) was enacted to establish the school based and public health effort for obesity reduction and diabetes prevention. Disease Self Management (DSM) is also another risk reduction methodology that is being integrated into primary health care. Funding to assist schools and local public health is being requested to enhance this effort and to address the epidemic of obesity and diabetes along the Texas/Mexico Border in particular in Laredo.

BACKGROUND

The City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD) partnered with the Social and Health Research Center (S&HRC) to implement Proyecto Bienestar Laredo (PBL) school-evidenced based health program. This evidence based proven strategy has dramatic positive results in weight and glucose reduction, healthier eating, increased physical activity and family support. Healthy Living/Viviendo Mejor (HLVM), a DSM chronic disease care model includes all the strategies mentioned above and peer support to better understand one's disease and make healthier choices. Resources are being requested to support: PBL: Expansion to children 0-5 year olds to decrease saturated fats, increase fiber, increase physical activity (PA) and to control body weight through a school cafeteria, after school activity, health screening and a family component (Family Fun Fiesta, Health and Physical Education class, School Food Service and Health Club). PBL has proven health outcomes improvement through wellness and early prevention for medically underserved and vulnerable communities with high-risk children for obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Important findings: 1) children who reduced their blood sugar levels and weight had higher TAKS scores and 2) PBL children made healthier choices and had healthier outcomes. Therefore, this proven strategy should be a supported effort by the TDSHS, Texas Education Agency, Health and Human Service Commission and the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Request for: Nutritionist/Health Educator to provide nutrition, physical activity (PA), healthier choices and health education in the schools. Children learn healthier habits, nutrition value, participate in more PA and with their parents learn about healthier eating and active living.

HLVM: Increase DSM for persons at risk of developing diabetes and/or confirmed to reduce complications and improve health outcomes (reduce kidney, vascular, heart and stroke disease) and prevent hospitalizations especially for short term complication and for preventable health issues. This effort has been integrated into primary care and is making a difference in healthier lifestyles.

Request for: Nutritionist/Health Educator to provide DSM integrated into primary care. Will be part of a cross trained multi-faceted team with a nurse and case manager to monitor the patients and reduce risks of chronic disease (diabetes) through case management, active participation in nutritional guidance, healthier cooking, PA (Zumba) and peer support understanding and management of disease education.

CONTACT

Dr. Hector Gonzalez
Health Department Director
2600 Cedar St.
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 795-4901
Fax: (956) 729-2632
Email: hgonzalez@ci.laredo.tx.us

Funding for Residency Program in Laredo

PROPOSAL

Laredo, the number one inland port of entry and the third largest customs district in the nation, remains a Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) designated Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA) and a Medically Underserved Area (MUA). To improve the quality of life and provide early access to preventive and primary care, we need a physician residency program in Laredo to fill the gaps in many specialties, but especially in Family Practice. Laredo, local hospitals and the medical community are committed to this effort, but need additional financial support to develop this program, not just for the benefit of Laredo, but for the entire Texas/Mexico Border and South Texas.

BACKGROUND

Laredo is a HPSA and MUA, but serves as a medical hub for an eleven (11) county area mostly sub-rural and urban in an area that continues to be one of the fastest growing in Texas. Recruitment, retention and retirement of physicians in the area is a challenge, but to meet this gap and to plan for the future of South Texas health care needs, a medical (physician) residency program is needed in Laredo; especially, in Family Practice and Public Health. History shows that residents tend to stay in the area they trained. This will help with recruitment and retention of physicians. Laredo is a fertile training ground for these new physicians as they will address current, emerging and new infectious and chronic diseases. Moreover, our over 35% underinsured population needs basic medical and preventive care. Prevention and a medical home with early access is also an economic safeguard instead of the higher costs of urgent care and hospitalization due to inadequate or no preventive and family medical care-Family Practitioners play a large and important role here.

Laredo already has unique evidence based best practices in disease self-management, school based health programs, infectious disease management and treatment and state of the art hospital training capacity. This is part of the excellence that can serve to provide a quality training field for residents in Family Practice. The City of Laredo and its Health Department (CLHD) is ready to partner with local efforts; such as, with Dr. David Garza and the School of Osteopathic Medicine at Incarnate Word University in San Antonio. Laredo, local hospitals and the medical community are ready to do their part to implement a residency program but require state legislative support for additional financial resources. This will help insure a healthier community not just for Laredo and the region but for all Texans.

CONTACTS

Hector Gonzalez, MD, MPH
Health Department Director
2600 Cedar Street
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 795-4901
Fax: (956) 729-2632
Email: hgonzalez@ci.laredo.tx.us

Laboratory Response Network Certification

PROPOSAL

Rapid laboratory detection along the Texas/Mexico Border is paramount for early detection and intervention, disease control, especially for new and emerging (Zika) diseases and to prevent spread. This is part of the health and bio-security response. Currently our laboratory capacity is not certified by the Texas Department of State Health Services to serve as a **Laboratory Response Network (LRN)** lab to detect bioterrorism agents, emerging and novel public health threats and emergencies and other public health threats. Laredo has a biosafety laboratory level III (BSL III) that was built in partnership with DSHS with the intent of becoming an LRN to enhance laboratory capacity on the Texas/Mexico Border. This would enhance our response to current and new biological threats. This certification will also facilitate Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) approval to reduce the risk of foodborne threats.

BACKGROUND

The Texas/Mexico Border is a target and must assure both homeland and health security for safety and protection against all public health urgent threats and bioterrorism. We are an international border and Laredo is the number one (1) inland port of entry with 40% of all US inland goods passing through Laredo's four international bridges, and we are the third largest customs district in the nation. With new trade agreements with Mexico, Central and South America, China, Europe, air travel and air cargo; trade and migration, we are a high threat level for public health risk. Trade, migration and population enhance the health security need to all hazardous threats by current, emerging and new diseases and bioterrorism on the Texas/Mexico border. Some of these potential threats are: Migration (Unaccompanied Children, Central American migrants released into our communities), new diseases such as Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERs), H1N1, Ebola and Zika as well with continued threats (Dengue Virus, Botulism, Ricin, Anthrax) and current Multi Drug Resistant and infectious diseases (Tuberculosis, foodborne illness, chemical exposure).

Because Laredo has one of the highest threat levels in comparison to current LRNs that have a much lesser threat threshold; we ask that our LRN designation be re-evaluated and granted. Our 4,000 square foot facility provides clinical, environmental and bio-safety lab III testing and detection. As an LRN, we can conduct additional biological testing for critical health bio-threats and other public health emergencies (Zika). The City of Laredo invested \$2,050,000.00 for renovation and \$120,000.00 for equipment, DSHS contributed \$750,000.00 for renovation and \$300,000.00 for equipment. It's time to support the full laboratory capacity.

CONTACT

Dr. Hector Gonzalez
Health Department Director
2600 Cedar Street
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 795-4901

Promote Healthy Food Choices in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Require Nutrition and Wellness Education to Reduce Obesity

PROPOSAL

Community best practices have shown we need to promote healthier food choices in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). To further address the obesity and diabetes epidemic along the Texas/Mexico Border, enhanced nutrition and wellness education should be provided for anyone applying for SNAP, Medicaid, CHIP, etc. In this manner, we can promote healthier choices and reduce the risk of obesity and diabetes and its medical and hospital complications.

BACKGROUND

We know that healthier food choices promote healthier lives. Therefore evaluating the nutrition standard and providing nutrition and wellness education in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is critically important as many children and families receive this assistance. Nutrition value standardization of foods, especially those provided by government subsidies- Women Infant and Children's Program (WIC), National School Meal Program and SNAP is critically important. These make an impact children's and their families' well-being; as well as, **provide food to prevent hunger**. However; families currently on SNAP, are allowed to purchase candy, cakes, chips and high carbohydrate sugar drinks which are not conducive to healthier outcomes. We need to test best practices incentives for persons on SNAP who chose healthier options, are more physically active and keep their appointments for preventive health care. Best Practices, such as those conducted in Laredo for Children and Families, can be expanded with additional resources. Even though additional resources will be needed initially, the long term savings and healthier outcomes are a substantial savings when you compare medical complications and hospitalizations.

We ask HHSC to work with the US Department of Agriculture to help address the obesity and diabetes epidemic by changing the current SNAP practices and align the menu with WIC and the National School Meal Program. Although we understand SNAP is a food and hunger program not a nutrition program, SNAP's current diet and nutrition value of foods contributes to the obesity crisis in the state, nation, and especially along the Texas/Mexico Border. SNAP allows for the purchase of soft drinks, candy, cookies, crackers, cakes, sweets, chips and energy drinks, all high in calories and sugars that do not have a positive nutrition value. We recommend that SNAP change their policy and not allow the purchase of high carbohydrate foods.

Laredo stands ready to share its best practices in wellness, nutrition education, disease self-management, physical activity, children's summer programs and community engagement to promote active living and reduce obesity, diabetes and heart disease; as well as, fight hunger.

CONTACT

Dr. Hector Gonzalez

Health Director

2600 Cedar St

Laredo, Texas 78040

Phone: (956) 795-4901

Fax: (956) 729-2632

Email: hgonzalez@ci.laredo.tx.us

Re-Initiate Tire Remediation Program

PROPOSAL

Enact legislation to impose a “deposit fee” for the purchase of tires if the consumer does not leave the old, used or scrap tire with the purchase of new or used tires. This will assist local communities through Texas to reduce illegal dumping and accumulation of tires that can serve as breeding ground for vectors especially mosquitoes that can also be a source of disease for Dengue Fever, West Nile Fever and now Chikungunya Virus.

BACKGROUND

The importance of proper tire disposal cannot be overstated in that it is not just an environmental and sanitation issue, but also a very critical, serious public health threat. Abandoned tires that hold stagnant water serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other vectors that pose a widespread public health threat for disease such as Dengue, West Nile and the new Chikungunya Virus and other vector borne diseases. In Laredo, we have enacted a new amendment to our Tire Ordinance that will impose a deposit (core fee) when the consumer purchases new or used tires if the consumer does not leave the old, used or scrap tire in exchange. The retailer can charge up to a five dollar (\$5) fee for the appropriate approved tire disposal and; in addition, if the old/scrap/used tire is not left at the time of purchase, the retailer can charge a core fee (Laredo’s fee \$10), but has up to seven (7) days to return a tire. This legislation, if enacted at the state level, can further assist communities to further create consciousness on tire remediation to reduce environmental challenges and reduce health risks to vectorborne disease.

CONTACTS

Stephen R. Geiss
Solid Waste
Manager 6912
Hwy. 359
Laredo, Texas 78041
Phone: (956) 795-2510
Fax: (956) 796-1105
Email: sgeiss@ci.laredo.tx.us

Hector Gonzalez, MD, MPH
Health Department Director
2600 Cedar Street
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 795-4901
Fax: (956) 729-2632
Email: hgonzalez@ci.laredo.tx.us

John Porter
Acting Environmental Services Director
619 Reynolds
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 794-1650
Fax: (956) 727-7944
Email: rmia@ci.laredo.tx.us

Homeland Security

Change Threat vs. Population Based On Funding Formulas

PROPOSAL

Border area communities must be classified as a separate threat risk zone when considering funding formulas for Targeted Infrastructure Capability grants. It serves to: 1) Recognize the threats to the homeland because of our proximity to other countries. 2) Places us in a better position to be considered for funding the mitigation of these threats. A separate threat assessment for border communities would accurately depict our vulnerabilities and the resources needed to strengthen our readiness level.

BACKGROUND

Currently the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) formula for Targeted Infrastructure Capability grants is awarded based primarily on the population of a metropolitan area. Grants such as the Urban Area Strategic Initiative (UASI) or Port Security awards are out of Laredo's reach because the population minimum does not meet grant criteria. While funding is typically distributed based on population and regardless of threat assessments, unique situations such as international border proximity, must be considered.

As first responders in a community located on the US/Mexico Border, we face many unique challenges. Examples of these are the enormous amounts of commercial traffic that travels, on our streets and crosses our four international bridges as a result of being the nation's largest inland port. Daily we face the possibility of chemical spill or hazardous materials release into our environment. Other examples we face as frontline emergency responders are:

- 1) We are the primary responders to incidents on the Rio Grande River.
- 2) We are the primary responders to bomb threats reported at our four international bridges.
- 3) Each year the number of emergency calls we make increase due to an ever increasing population.
- 4) The ever present threat of an outbreak as 15,000 visitors crosses into our community every day.
- 5) Increased drug related violence in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico that increases the threat of narco related violence into our city.

Access to federal funding is essential to manage these threats efficiently and safely and to remain prepared for any number of emergencies that endanger our community.

CONTACT

Steve Landin
Fire Chief
616 E. Del Mar Blvd.
Laredo, TX 78045
Phone: (956) 718-6020
Fax: (956) 728-7119
Email: slandin@ci.laredo.tx.us

Funding for Border Region Behavioral Health Center

PROPOSAL

Request for funding for the Border Region Behavioral Health Center (BRBHC) for Law Enforcement resources regarding ED and Medical Clearances requests under Police custody and supervision.

BACKGROUND

Police encounters are believed to be particularly dangerous for people with mental illness and police officers, little known about the details of these interactions including the occurrence of injuries, despite numerous research, studies and media reports, it can be equally, if not more dangerous for people with mental illness. This fear of dangerousness has been the basis for the creation of specialized interventions such as Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT).

The FBI reported that 1,114 officers nationally were assaulted during a call responding to a person with mental illness in 2007. The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model is possibly the best known and most widely adopted model for improving police response to persons with mental illness. It is a police-based, pre-booking approach with specially trained officers who provide first-line response to calls involving a person with mental illness and who act as liaisons to the mental health system.

The Laredo Police Department has 43 (13%) certified CIT officers including investigators & supervisors out of a total of 312 patrolmen who handle service calls and interact with mentally ill citizens.

Measuring police responses to people with metal issues can be difficult for police departments and researchers alike, in lieu of often officers do not record police encounters that end with informal dispositions or mild injuries, although a person who has a mental illness is most likely to come in contact with the police when they are symptomatic and are deemed a danger to themselves or others.

The current protocol that LPD and Border Region Behavioral Health Center (BRBHC) is on a courtesy, verbal and unofficial agreement when persons in need of mental assessment are required to undergo a Medical Clearance from a local hospital and later require an Emergency Detention application filed.

The cultural shift towards the mentally ill population better response and handling is changing proactively versus populating county jails with them. A study estimated that just under 4% of American adults were severely mentally ill but generated 10% of calls for polices services. They occupy at least one in five prison and jail beds. A fractured mental health system with cutbacks in financing for mental health services has the effect of putting police officers in the front lines of dealing with many people who have psychiatric disorders. Jails around the county have filed with mentally ill inmates who, unable to obtain treatment in the community, are arrested time and again for minor offenses.

Police departments require crisis training for all or most of their officers; it brings a level of accountability to the community, in addition to allegations of excessive force declines when officers are properly trained in this field.

A cost analysis of resources and man/hours of the Laredo Police Department incurs handling Emergency Detention and Medical Clearances averages from the high of \$884 employing nine (9) officers on two hour rotation for the duration of 18 hours on single incident in 2015 to the minimum of one hour at \$49.00.

During 2014 the LPD handled 131 calls for service on Emergency Detention (ED) requests at \$26,000.00 and 122 ED service calls consuming \$24,215.00 approximately in 2015. The analysis of the month of March 2016 resulted in 11 ED calls for service, resulting in the average of 4 man hours/call resulting in \$8,756.00 for the month.

With the intention to reduce, restrict and prevent expenses and deplete important police personnel from their crime prevention and servicing the public's requests; the LPD and BRBHC management enacted two initiatives.

1. The implementation of the Mobil Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) which consists of a nurse and a qualified mental health professional-community services (QMHP-CS) to be available and respond to the site where the mental illness individual with police officers and make the necessary assessments recommendation.
2. Pilot project to pair a CIT certified police officer and a Mental Health assessor nurse to visit repeat patients on the community with the purpose of saving costs and referrals to the Behavioral Health Center.

It is the position of the Laredo Police Department to request additional funding and resources for the Laredo community, as the National landscape calls for a better understanding and care of these individuals. In addition, to facilitate Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, and certification either by monetary funding and/or 'train the trainer' seminars, to encompass as least 75% of the Patrol force.

CONTACT

Raymond E. Garner
Chief of Police
4712 Maher Avenue
Laredo, Texas 78041
Phone: (956) 795-2888
Fax: (956) 795-3120
Email: rgarner@ci.laredo.tx.us

Funding for Radio Communications and Interoperability

PROPOSAL

The Laredo Fire Department responds to emergencies not only in the City of Laredo, but also in the County of Webb. As such, there is a dire need to increase the radio communication coverage in certain rural areas of the county.

The ability to operate our radios is essential to the safe and effective response to the different emergency calls that we make on a daily basis. In addition to this, there is a need to communicate in a seamless manner with other responding agencies during a multi-agency response whether in our community or surrounding areas.

BACKGROUND

Laredo, Texas is located on the US/Mexico border in Webb County. The City's jurisdictional boundaries consist of 83.44 square miles with 40% of this land area being utilized for residential purposes. An additional 43% is used for commercial, industrial, or institutional purposes according to the Laredo Development Foundation. The Laredo Fire Department is the primary provider of Mutual Aid to the surrounding counties of Zapata, Jim Hogg, La Salle and Webb counties.

Radio coverage is inadequate when responding in rural areas, resulting in no communication operability for responding units. Over 40% of our primary response area falls into the category of inadequate coverage, or no communications operability for our first responders.

The problem is more acute in the northeastern part of the County between Interstate Highway 35 and State Highway 44 as well as between State Highway 359 and Farm-to-Market Road 649 located in the southeastern part of the County. These areas include populated rural towns such as Mirando City, Oilton, and Bruni.

In many instances, our dispatch center has attempted to communicate with our units and have failed to do so because of the lack of radio coverage. There are documented cases where Laredo fire crews requested assistance while fighting wild land fires in the County and were unable to communicate, endangering the lives of firefighters, because of this problem.

To illustrate the Laredo Fire Department's activity in rural area, consider the following trends. In 2008, Laredo Fire responded to a total of 105 wild land fires, 305 in 2009 and as of August 2010 the number skyrocketed to 293. If this trend continues, we expect to see the busiest wild land fire season in recorded department history.

The danger is also evident when Webb County Sheriff's Deputies attempt to relay directions to our units when responding to medical emergencies. The information is transmitted from the deputies in the field to their dispatcher, who in turn conveys it to our dispatchers who then attempt to contact our units via radio. This process adds minutes to a situation where seconds count.

Furthermore, as the nation's largest in-land port, our department is the primary Fire and EMS responder to motor vehicle accidents on our highways and roads. The daily commercial traffic count on our international bridges exceeds 15,000 trailers laden with goods, with a significant portion of these being hazardous materials.

Interoperability with other agencies is provided via radio gateways that have been applied during emergencies. This is only successful where we have proper overlapping coverage.

The National Preparedness Guidelines require jurisdictions to work together at all levels of government. Our request addresses these national priorities: Expand Regional Collaboration; Implement NIMS and the National Response Plan; and Strengthen Interoperable and Operable Communications and enhance our Mobile Command Unit (MCU) Capabilities. The Interoperable Communications Equipment requested in this grant is a major equipment item necessary for each Homeland Security Mission Area.

CONTACT

Steve Landin
Fire Chief
616 E. Del Mar Blvd.
Laredo, TX 78045
Phone: (956) 718-6020
Fax: (956) 728-7119
Email: slandin@ci.laredo.tx.us

Funding for Regional Radio Communications Center

PROPOSAL

The City of Laredo is vulnerable to a variety of hazards that threaten our businesses and environment. Our City management and elected officials have taken a proactive approach to keeping our community safe. One way to ensure a safer community is the creation of a Regional Radio Communications Center that will serve as a regional hub for disaster and emergency radio communications.

Recent emergency incidents have shown the need for all dispatchers of local, state and federal agencies be housed in one location. Our response required coordination and information sharing. However, we lacked simple face to face communications that could be easily achieved if all agencies were housed together under one roof. We need a dedicated facility for emergency radio communications and information sharing. This will be beneficial during a major event as well as on a daily basis for optimal situational awareness and threat monitoring.

Thus, the purpose of the Communications Center is to provide a location where multiple public safety agencies can coordinate to make decisions, dispatch resources, and share critical information. The Communications Center is a support element to the Incident Command structure. For all incidents, regardless of cause, response will focus on actions taken to save lives, sustain life, and protect infrastructure. Its design will be such that our public safety officials will be able to mitigate emergencies or disasters on both sides of the border. The City recognizes that a disaster that affects our neighbors to the south will defiantly affect our community. Coordination with Mexican authorities via our Radio Communications Center is essential.

BACKGROUND

Laredo, Texas is located on the US/Mexico border in Webb County. The City's jurisdictional boundaries consist of 83.44 square miles with 40% of this land area being utilized for residential purposes. An additional 43% is used for commercial, industrial, or institutional purposes according to the Laredo Development Foundation. The Laredo Fire Department is the primary provider of Mutual Aid to the surrounding counties of Zapata, Jim Hogg, La Salle and Webb Counties.

Additionally, Laredo is the main NAFTA corridor for the United States and correspondingly in Texas for international trade. Laredo has four international bridges and carries 50% of all NAFTA related trade through Texas. Fifty percent of the trade that crosses through Laredo is hazardous material. United States, Mexico, Central and South America's economies depend on secure bridges (the artery through which life flows for the business-trade sector). Terrorist actions or any disruptive situations would be detrimental to local, state, national and international economies. As per 2015 statistics, Laredo remains the number one inland port in the United States with \$284.33 billion in trade in the world. Almost half of the cargo that travels through the Laredo Corridor by land and rail carry hazardous materials. Laredo has an enormous potential for a disaster involving hazardous materials due to the volume of hazmat cargo, commerce, and tourism present on both sides of the border. Additionally, Laredo has

over 5, 075 acres of warehouse space, and at least a quarter of that space contains hazardous materials and is highly vulnerable to terrorism and biochemical terrorism.

The City of Laredo is approximately 150 miles away from any community that has the capability to assist us in an emergency situation. Due to this, Laredo is the primary emergency response mechanism to any emergency within our region. In order to utilize incident command procedures to its fullest potential, a facility must be dedicated for mid to large-scale emergency communications. Currently, all public safety entities have their own radio communication centers. The need for all entities to work under one roof will greatly improve interoperability and information sharing. It is for this reason that we respectfully request the funding to assist us in the construction and implementation of a new dedicated Emergency Radio Communications Center.

CONTACT

Steve Landin

Fire Chief

616 E. Del Mar Blvd.

Laredo, TX 78045

Phone: (956) 718-6020

Fax: (956) 728-7119

Email: slandin@ci.laredo.tx.us

Local Government

Coin Operated Machine Businesses

PROPOSAL

The City of Laredo Police Department is proposing that the State of Texas Legislature amend the current law concerning 8-liner coin operated machines. The current law allows 8-liners to legally operate, but only allows the cash payout amounts to be no more than

\$5 dollars in actual value. This issue creates a problem by tasking the local law enforcement community with constant monitoring and enforcing of applicable gambling laws. The costs associated with building time and labor intensive prosecutable criminal cases against 8-liner businesses financially burdens local law enforcement. In the end, and due to the lucrative nature of the 8-liner business, the temptation upon 8-liner business owners/operators to payout more than the allowed amount apparently outweighs the risk of facing arrest (Class A or B Misdemeanor) or paying fines.

The Laredo Police Department recommends either of the two most obvious options. The first option of which would be to lift the limit on cash payouts, thus making it legal for businesses to payout cash amounts to match winnings. At this junction, with careful regulation and state monitoring, such as in Nevada or Louisiana, the State of Texas could potentially keep Texans from traveling outside the State for gambling endeavors and further, the State of Texas could stand to create a new and sizeable cash crop to enhance any element that best benefits the State such as: education, law enforcement, etc. The second option would be to totally ban cash payouts for any form of coin operated amusement machines in Texas. The City of Laredo does not specifically favor one option over the other.

BACKGROUND

The establishment of amusement businesses, commonly referred to as “8-liners,” is booming in Laredo. The businesses are zoned and permitted through the City of Laredo as legitimate businesses. The 8-liner businesses are highly lucrative amusement establishments featuring coin operated apparatuses. The businesses are established by legitimate business owners and operators. These businesses attract a large following of retirees, senior citizens and those who opt not to travel long distances for entertainment.

The City of Laredo has a population of approximately 255,473 and has 64 permitted 8-liner businesses (approx. 5,400 machines). These businesses are currently governed by local planning, zoning and permitting laws, State of Texas tax/registration through the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts Office and State of Texas gambling Penal laws. The local and state permitting laws seem appropriate and are generally complied with. A problem arises now that the 8-liner businesses have become too numerous and proved lucrative. The State law that limits 8-liner businesses’ cash payout of prizes to less than \$5 is the one factor that business owners/operators are not abiding by. It is apparent that there is public demand for cash payout to amounts greater than \$5. Cash payouts are what attract customers. Business owners/operators then succumb to the demand for greater than \$5 payouts and break the law.

There is public sentiment to allow a greater than allowed payout. Likewise, there is a seemingly equal amount of sentiment against such currently illegal payouts. The lucrative and demand aspects of the equation have promoted a high incidence of owner/operator disregard for limiting payouts to less than \$5, thus violating existing law against it. At this point, the burden is cast upon local law enforcement to enforce the law as it stands. Local law enforcement has struggled to keep up with the controversy centering on the \$5 payout limit. Enforcement and penalties related to this type crime have not deterred owners/operators from continuing to violate this law. City and County law enforcement agencies have incurred considerable cost in manpower and resources to monitor, arrest, and prosecute. An observation on the issue is that the violation in payment of over \$5 is a criminal violation and therefore tends to attract a corruption element to the businesses, both from internal and external sources. Since businesses have a need to conceal the violation of payout, they are susceptible to a myriad of other crimes to include extortion, money laundering, etc. If the State were to establish a Gambling Commission to regulate and enforce these types of gambling businesses then the local Police could redirect their efforts toward more substantive law enforcement objectives than enforcing a less than \$5 payout limit.

CONTACT

Raymond E. Garner
Chief of Police
4712 Maher Avenue
Laredo, Texas 78041
Phone: (956) 795-2888
Fax: (956) 795-3120
Email: rgarner@ci.laredo.tx.us

Rebate on State Occupancy Tax for a proposed Convention Center/Hotel in Laredo, Texas

PROPOSAL

The City of Laredo, an incorporated home-rule municipality, requests an amendment to the state tax code by adding Laredo, Texas to the list of cities deemed “eligible central municipalities” under the Texas Tax Code § 351.001. Thus, allowing for Laredo, Texas to receive a rebate of state hotel occupancy tax, state sales tax, and state alcoholic beverage taxes from the eligible project for the first 10 years after the project opens for occupancy. Said eligible project is a convention center/hotel currently being proposed for development in downtown Laredo.

BACKGROUND

The City of Laredo has contracted the services of a consultant, Convention Sports and Leisure, to assess the feasibility of a new convention center/hotel project in downtown Laredo. A final report is eminent as of the submission of this legislative agenda. As a municipality, its assets do not currently contain a meeting facility, convention center or a conference center hotel.

The City of Laredo City Council has awarded this feasibility study scope of work with the desire to proceed with constructing a facility in the near future. City of Laredo staff has prepared documentation to place the Convention Center/Hotel project in the Capital Improvement Plan for 2017-2018 in order to allow time to prepare the adequate funding mechanisms that could be employed to realize the construction of a convention center/hotel project.

The construction of a convention center/hotel in downtown Laredo is seen as a major enhancement project that would assist in revitalizing this central business district and would be mutually beneficial to the visitor economy of the City of Laredo and potentially the region.

CONTACT

Blasita J. Lopez
Director
Laredo Convention and Visitors Bureau
800-361-3360
blopez@ci.laredo.tx.us

Transit

Implement Capital Program to Replace Aging Transit Fleet

SITUATION

The City of Laredo (El Metro) has a bus fleet total of forty-eight (48) heavy-duty diesel and compressed natural gas buses for fixed route services including eighteen (18) vans for the Demand Response service. The current annual ridership in the urbanized area of Laredo is over 3.1 million passengers. El Metro ranks as one of the highest amongst peer transit services, and overall ridership; fleet operation cost is the biggest road block towards a cost effective position.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines minimum service life expectancy for heavy-duty buses is twelve (12) years or five hundred thousand (500,000) miles. In 2016, the Laredo revenue fleet will exceed the minimum service life expectancy by thirty-six percent (36%) of the fifty-three (53) buses the City has in service. In addition, in 2016 all of the Demand Response fleet meets the minimum service of life expectancy of five (5) years.

Residents of the City of Laredo, neighboring Cities of Rio Bravo and El Cenizo, alongside with visitors and tourists, benefit from El Metro buses for their transportation needs. Primarily, El Metro riders rely on public transportation to go to work, to attend secondary and college level schools, and to attend medical or personal appointments. Transit dependent riders are mostly low-income residents for whom the ownership of a vehicle is not financially feasible. In addition, to local residents, El Metro also services visitors from the City of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico who visit Laredo for leisure or to visit relatives.

The high demand for public transportation and utilization of El Metro Transit System continuously takes a high toll on the revenue of fleet. Although fare collection is high, El Metro like most transit agencies across the nation is unable to reach a strong financial position to afford or borrow the capital funds required to replace its aging fleet.

SOLUTION

Capital funds are needed to procure twelve (12) heavy-duty buses and nine (9) vans. Fleet replacements and retirement of non-cost effective units is crucial to improve the operational efficiency of the agency. Equally important renewed fleets will enable El Metro to provide better quality, safer and energy efficient public transportation services.

El Metro's vehicle replacement plan is outlined in the City of Laredo Capital Improvement Plan, and it is also reflected in El Metro's Five Year Transit Development Plan. The City of Laredo is requesting \$4.9 million dollars in assistance to replace twelve (12) heavy-duty buses and nine (9) Demand Response vans.

CONTACT

Claudia San Miguel
Laredo Transit Acting General Manager
1301 Farragut
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 795-2288 Ext. 234
Fax: (956) 795-2258
Email: csanmiguel@ci.laredo.tx.us

Transportation

Dedicated Aviation Sales Tax Revenue for Airport Development

PROPOSAL

Seek legislation that provides for the dedication of aviation sales and franchise taxes in support of airport development throughout the State of Texas. Both general aviation and commercial service airports would be eligible to receive state funding.

Increased state funding would contribute greatly to airport safety, security, maintenance and development and make Texas airports more competitive for federal grants. Increased investment in airport development would serve to enhance the ability and capacity of Texas airports to serve as catalyst for local, regional and state wide economic development.

BACKGROUND

Reference: City of Laredo Resolution No. 2008-R-028 approved by Mayor and City Council on April 21, 2008 and on July 14, 2008 the Webb County Commissioners Court approved a resolution supporting the City's resolution.

The State of Texas is among the very few states that does not have a dedicated source of funding for airport development. Currently the Texas Department of Transportation provides limited funding to its Division of Aviation in the amount of \$16.0 million per year from the non dedicated portion of Fund Six for airport development. There are 300 plus general aviation airports in the current TxDOT airport funding program and due to limited funding, no state funds for capital improvement projects are available for commercial service airports.

The State of Texas annually collects approximately \$80.0 million in sales and franchise taxes from aviation and air transportation related goods and services and deposits this revenue into the State General Fund. The state sales and franchise taxes on aviation and air transportation goods and services would provide a dedicated funding source for the states' airports and would provide a close link between the tax and how that money is spent.

The State of Texas has set precedence when it approved the dedication of sales tax revenue collected from sporting goods to be dedicated to the state's park system.

CONTACT

Mario Maldonado
Acting Airport Manager
5210 Bob Bullock Loop
Laredo, Texas 78041
Phone: (956) 795-2000
Fax:(956) 795-2572
Email: mmaldonad0@ci.laredo.tx.us

Hachar-Reuthinger Parkway/Highway Mines Road IH-35 (at approx. mile marker 15)

PROPOSAL

The City of Laredo seeks continued legislative and Texas Department of Transportation support for the development and construction of the Hachar-Reuthinger Parkway/Highway.

BACKGROUND

The Hachar-Reuthinger Parkway/Highway is part of an overweight corridor that was created by the Texas legislature during the 84th legislative session. This overweight corridor promises to provide a relief route for commercial truck traffic traveling to and from Laredo's World Trade Bridge that causes heavy congestion on FM 1472 (Mines Road). The corridor also presents an economic opportunity for the City in that it opens approximately 7,000 acres to industrial, commercial and residential development. Additionally, the primary effect of this corridor will be to provide for expedited routing of international truck cargo to newly developed warehousing centers and access to I35.

The City of Laredo, Webb County and the Laredo MPO have partnered to develop this project. To date the City has funded and submitted schematic design and environmental documents to TxDOT for a portion of the proposed roadway. Webb County, through the use of its funds along with MPO funding has started the process of acquiring consultants for the remaining section of the roadway for schematic design and environmental. Additionally, the City has worked with landowners and received commitments for the future dedication of a 400 ft. by ±8.6 mile right-of-way corridor totaling ±420 acres.

CONTACT

Nathan R. Bratton
Director Planning and Zoning Department
1120 San Bernardo Avenue
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 794-1613
Fax: (956) 794-1624
Email: nbratton@ci.laredo.tx.us

U.S. 59/Future I-69 W Corridor (US 59/US 59 Business to Havana)

PROPOSAL

The City of Laredo seeks legislative and Texas Department of Transportation support and funding for the completion of the U.S. 59/I-69 W (f/k/a State Loop 20 Bob Bullock Loop) corridor project.

BACKGROUND

The project limits for this roadway upgrade begins on the east side of the City of Laredo at the junction of US 59/future I69 W and US 59 Business and proceeds north along US 59/Loop 20 to its intersection with Havana Rd. The City of Laredo, Webb County and the Laredo MPO have worked to bring the section of roadway to interstate standards. The design for the upgrade of this section of roadway includes five overpasses, four lane divided highway and frontage roads.

The upgrade to this section of roadway is critical. It has been identified by the Texas Department of Transportation's I-69 Segment Four & Five Committee as the proposed I-69 corridor along with U.S. 59 east. The design, to interstate highway standards, of Loop 20 from I35 to Havana Drive has been funded and is underway; however portions of the construction of the remaining segment have not been funded. Specifically, the overpasses at Shiloh, Del Ma and University. The MPO has provided for the funding of two overpasses, Jacaman (2020) and Airport (2018) but the roadway sections between these two overpasses remain unfunded.

The City, County and MPO, having programmed funding for two overpasses, seeks additional funding to accelerate the letting of Jacaman overpass (approx. \$5m) and construct roadway sections from US 59/US 59 Business to the Airport overpass (approx. \$20m).

CONTACT

Nathan R. Bratton
Director Planning and Zoning Department
1120 San Bernardo Avenue
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 794-1613
Fax: (956) 794-1624
Email: nbratton@ci.laredo.tx.us

World Trade Bridge Fast Lane Additional bridge lanes Additional Exit Booths "Weigh-in Motion" System

PROPOSAL

The City of Laredo seeks continued legislative and Texas Department of Transportation support for the development and construction of a Fast Lane, 8 additional bridge lanes for a total of eight northbound and eight south bound lanes, additional exit booths and a northbound “weigh in motion” system exit.

BACKGROUND

With the continued surge in international trade the City is undertaking several projects to increase the efficiency of the operations and mobility at the World Trade Bridge. Approximately 20% of the north bound commercial traffic on World Trade Bridge is comprised of trucks with empty containers and another $\pm 20\%$ is comprised of pre-screened and approved loaded trucks. These commercial vehicles normally mix with loaded commercial trucks that are undergoing inspection at the bridge creating a bottleneck. The FASTLANE project will divert these empty trucks and pre-screened trucks to a separate lane which allows them to go through the bridge system without delay.

The Weigh in Motion System is another improvement that will allow the City to implement the overweight corridor. As trucks leave the bridge they will be weighed, without stopping, and those that are overweight will be automatically permitted and charged. This will allow greater flexibility for transportation companies and speed the delivery of goods. The addition of 4 exit booths on the northbound side of the bridge will also decrease wait times and promote faster bridge crossing.

Finally, the third and most intense improvement will be to add additionally lanes to the existing bridge. Currently there are four north and four southbound lanes. The City will seek a Presidential Permit amendment to allow the construction of an additional four northbound lanes and four southbound lanes. This will bring the total number of lanes to 16 (8 northbound lanes and 8 southbound lanes).

CONTACT

Nathan R. Bratton
Director Planning and Zoning Department
1120 San Bernardo Avenue
Laredo, Texas 78040
Phone: (956) 794-1613
Fax: (956) 794-1624
Email: nbratton@ci.laredo.tx.us