



BORDER TRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING



Brownsville Event Center
1 Events Center Boulevard
Brownsville, TX 78526

April 16, 2024 | 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. CT



Meeting Agenda

8:00–8:30 a.m. **Coffee and Networking**

8:30–9:30 a.m.

Safety Minute

Francisco Almanza, *International Trade and Border Planning Coordinator, Texas Department of Transportation*

Welcome and Introductions

• Roll Call



Hon. Jane Nelson
Texas Secretary of State and Chair, Border Trade Advisory Committee



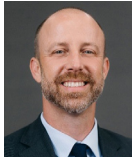
Mr. Alejandro "Alex" G. Meade III
Commissioner, Texas Transportation Commission



Mr. Alvin New
Commissioner, Texas Transportation Commission



Mrs. Caroline A. Mays, AICP
Director, Planning and Modal Programs, TxDOT



Hon. John Cowen Jr.
Mayor, City of Brownsville



Hon. Morgan LaMantia
Senator, Texas Senate



Hon. Judith Arrieta
Mexican General Consulate in Brownsville, Texas



Hon. Brianna Powers
United State General Consulate in Matamoros, México.



Hon. Susan Harper
Consulate General of Canada in Dallas



Hon. Sandra Shaddick
Consulate General of Canada in Monterrey



Lic. Devorah Karren Ibarra
representing Secretary of Regional and Agricultural Development of Nuevo León



Lic. Fernando Alba
Undersecretary of Innovation and Economic Development of Chihuahua.

Border Trade Advisory Committee Members

9:30–9:35 a.m.

Adoption of the Feb 20, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Hon. Jane Nelson, *Texas Secretary of State and Chair, Border Trade Advisory Committee*

Committee adopts minutes from last meeting.

9:35–9:45 a.m.

Recap of the Feb 20, 2024, BTAC meeting

Marvina Cephas, *International Trade and Border Planning Coordinator, Texas Department of Transportation*

Recap of previous meeting key discussion.

9:45–9:55 a.m.

BTMP Advancing Recommendations Update

- Commercial Vehicle Driver Training Program

Sergio Vasquez, *Border Program Manager, International Trade and Border Planning Branch, Texas Department of Transportation*

Present program update.

Questions and comments. Discussion.

9:55–10:40 a.m.

Border Connectivity Studies Update

- First -Last mile connectivity
- Connectivity between border crossings
- Connectivity between border regions

Marvina Cephas, *International Trade and Border Planning Coordinator, Texas Department of Transportation*
Jolanda Prozzi, *Consultant*
Paula Dowell, *Consultant*

Present program update.

Questions, comments. Discussion.

10:40–10:55 a.m.

House Bill 4422

Sergio Vasquez, *Border Program Manager, International Trade and Border Planning Branch, Texas Department of Transportation*

Present program update.

Questions and comments. Discussion.

Meeting Agenda

10:55-11:20 a.m.	Regional Update Presentations Pedro Alvarez , District Engineer Pharr District, TxDOT Ms. Helen Ramirez , City Manager, Brownsville, TX	Present local infrastructure projects. Questions, comments. Discussion.
11:20-11:40 a.m.	Space X Ms. Kathryn Lueders , Starbase General Manager, Space X	Presentation on the company perspective and the impact on the region. Questions, comments. Discussion.
11:40-11:50 p.m.	Mexico's Border States Presentation Lic. Fernando Alba , Undersecretary, Secretary of Innovation and Economic Development of Chihuahua	Segment for quick update presentations about important specific topics, not referring to open new presentations States may want to present.
11:50-12:00 p.m.	Open Discussion – Future Meetings and Topics Hon. Jane Nelson , Texas Secretary of State and Chair, Border Trade Advisory Committee	Discuss any outstanding issues and summary of action items and future meetings and topics.
12:00 p.m.	Adjourn Hon. Jane Nelson , Texas Secretary of State and Chair, Border Trade Advisory Committee	

Speaker Bios



Hon. Jane Nelson

Texas Secretary of State and Chair, Border Trade Advisory Committee

Secretary Nelson is a businesswoman and former teacher who served two terms on the State Board of Education and 30 years as a State Senator representing North Texas.

The first woman in Texas legislative history to chair a standing budget-writing committee, Secretary Nelson was Chair of the Senate Finance Committee for four sessions. She was a member of the Senate State Affairs Committee, which oversees election policy, for eight sessions. She served as chair of the Sunset Advisory Commission, the Nominations Committee, the Select Committee on Cybersecurity and the Senate Health & Human Services Committee. She was also a member of the Legislative Budget Board, the Legislative Audit Committee and the Privacy Protection Advisory Council.

Secretary Nelson and her husband, J. Michael Nelson, owned and operated an aircraft component manufacturing company in Denton County. They have five children and 12 grandchildren.



Mr. Alejandro "Alex" G. Meade III

Commissioner, Texas Transportation Commission, TxDOT

Alejandro "Alex" G. Meade III is a member of the Texas Transportation Commission, which oversees statewide activities of the Texas Department of Transportation. He was appointed commissioner by Governor Greg Abbott on March 21, 2023. Meade, who lives in Mission, was

appointed to serve on the commission for a term set to expire Feb. 1, 2025.

Meade serves as the executive vice president for Texas Regional Bank, where he manages their public policy strategy and economic development.

Meade is a Brownsville native, who previously served as the city manager of Pharr, where he managed a \$200 million budget and almost 700 employees. He also has served as the chief executive officer of the Mission Economic Development Corporation. His career also includes positions as principal of P3 Economics, an economic development consulting firm in Brownsville; the director of Economic Development at the Harlingen Area Chamber of Commerce; and private sector positions in accounting and management.

Meade, earned his bachelor's degree in business administration in economics from St. Edward's University. He earned a master's in business administration from the University of Texas at Brownsville, and a master's in public administration from the University of Texas-Pan American. He is certified as an Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP) and is a Certified Public Manager (CPM). Meade is an alumnus of the Texas Lyceum and is a board member of the Border Trade Alliance, former board of regent for Texas State Technical College System, and a former member of the Texas Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors.



Mr. Alvin New

Commissioner, Texas Transportation Commission, TxDOT

Alvin New is a member of the Texas Transportation Commission, which oversees statewide activities of the Texas Department of Transportation.

New is a business investor, rancher and former San Angelo Mayor. New is a lifelong resident of West Texas and was born in Brownfield. He has lived mostly in or near San Angelo since 1981.

New spent most of his career with Town & Country Food Stores. He started as a clerk while getting his business administration degree from Angelo State University. New worked his way up to chief executive officer and part owner. He and his partners sold their stake in the convenience store chain about a decade ago. He currently serves as a member of the Texas Tech University Foundation Board and the Goodfellow Air Force Base Advisory Council. New earned his bachelor's degree in business administration in management from Angelo State University. Commissioner New was appointed February 20, 2018, and re-appointed April 8, 2021. His second term will expire February 2027.



Mrs. Caroline A. Mays, AICP

Director, Planning and Modal Programs, TxDOT

Caroline Mays joined the Texas Department of Transportation in late 2012 and has held several positions including, Statewide Freight coordinator, Freight Planning Branch manager, director of Freight and International Trade/Border Section, and currently serves as the director of Planning and Modal Programs. She is charged with developing and managing TxDOT's multimodal Freight Planning Program, International Trade and Border Planning Program, and Statewide Corridor Planning Program. In addition, she is responsible for overseeing the Texas Freight Advisory Committee and the Border Trade Advisory Committee and she has been instrumental in the development of the state's multimodal Texas Freight Mobility Plan and is currently leading the development of the Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan and overseeing multiple corridor studies throughout the state.

Mays is a member of the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Certified Planners. She serves as the vice-chair of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Special Committee on Freight and is a member of AASHTO's Committee on Transportation Systems Operations Working Group on Freight Operations. Mays was recently appointed to the World Road Association Technical Committee on Freight. Mays holds a bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Waterloo, Canada and a masters degree of Science in Planning from the University of Toronto, Canada.

Speaker Bios



Hon. John Cowen Jr.

Mayor, City of Brownsville

Elected mayor of the city of Brownsville in 2023, Mayor John Cowen, Jr., a distinguished leader whose vision and dedication have significantly impacted the city of Brownsville. Before his mayoral tenure, he served the city as commissioner at-large “a,” a position he was elected to in 2019, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to his community.

Mayor Cowen’s tenure as an elected official has been marked by a strong focus on economic development, fiscal stewardship, transparency, and oversight. These efforts have underpinned the city’s progress and prosperity under his leadership. He has served as chairman of the Greater Brownsville Incentives Corporation, chairman of the city of Brownsville audit and oversight committee, and held directorships at IBC Bank Brownsville, the Texas Business Leadership Council, the Saint Joseph Academy Endowment, and the Brownsville Community Foundation.

Moreover, Mayor Cowen has contributed his expertise as a director of the housing authority for the city of Brownsville, chairman of the Saint Joseph Academy School Board, and director of the Emerging Leaders Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

Beyond his public service, Mayor Cowen is the president of Cowen Group, LTD, leading the company in customs brokerage, warehousing and distribution, commercial real estate, and multi-family development. His business acumen, gained from overseeing the company’s strategic planning and growth, as well as his experience advising on value-added tax and customs issues at Deloitte in Chicago and New York City, have greatly benefited Brownsville.



Hon. Morgan LaMantia

Senator, Texas Senate

A Rio Grande Valley native and sixth-generation Texan, State Senator Morgan LaMantia (D – Palm Valley) was elected to the Texas Senate in 2022. As the first female to represent Senate District 27, she proudly serves South Texas and the Coastal Bend, encompassing Bee, San Patricio, Kleberg, Kenedy, Willacy, Cameron, and portions of Nueces and Hidalgo counties.

After earning her bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Austin and her law degree from St. Mary’s University School of Law, Senator LaMantia returned to the Rio Grande Valley, where she worked as an associate attorney at Atlas, Hall & Rodriguez, LLP. She soon went on to work in data analytics for her family business, L&F Distributors, where she currently serves as In-House Counsel. Her achievements at L&F include revamping the company’s healthcare plan for over 1,200 employees and promptly resolving supply chain and safety equipment issues that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an active member of her community, Senator LaMantia has served on the boards of the Stars Scholarship Fund, the Gladys Porter Zoo, and the Museum of South Texas History. By building opportunities through hard work, giving back, and paying it forward, she seeks to carry on the legacy of her grandfather, Joe LaMantia Jr., who inspired her journey in public service.



Hon. Judith Arrieta

Mexican General Consulate in Brownsville, Texas

Minister of the Mexican Foreign Service since 2014. Since April 2nd, 2024, Judith Arrieta is the head of the Mexican Consulate in Brownsville. She was the Deputy Consul during 2023. During this year, she has promoted binational rapprochement between chambers of commerce, technological institutions, and spatial development agencies. Previously, she served as Head of Chancery at the Embassy of Mexico in India; Advisor to the Head of the Foreign Minister’s Office; Coordinator of Advisors to the Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights; Coordinator of the Second and Third Committee of the UN General Assembly at the Mexican Mission in New York, and of economic and cooperation affairs at the missions of Mexico to the European Union in Brussels and to International Organizations in Geneva. She was Consul at the Embassy of Mexico in Argentina (2003-2008) and prior to that she was in charge of global affairs, regional integration and negotiation of bilateral agreements.

Judith Arrieta holds a degree in International Relations from El Colegio de México; a PhD in Political Science from the University of Belgrano in Argentina; and master’s degrees in International Trade from the Solvay Institute and the Free University of Brussels, in Diplomatic Studies from the Matias Romero Institute, and in Diplomacy and International Relations from the Diplomatic School of Madrid. She has taken several certificates in consular documentation, multilateral negotiations, trade promotion and European integration. She has also published articles on international issues of interest to Mexico, the most recent on feminist foreign policy.



Hon. Brianna Powers

United State General Consulate in Matamoros, México

Brianna Powers is the Consul General in Matamoros, Mexico. Previously, she was the Director of the Branch Office in Banja Luka, leading U.S. forward engagement in northern Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2020 to 2023. Brianna has also served in Bern, Switzerland; Brasília, Brazil; Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Monterrey, Mexico; and in various offices in Washington.

Brianna Powers holds a B.A. in History and Spanish from Duke University. She speaks Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. She is married and has two sons. She is very happy to return to Mexico where she began her diplomatic career.

Speaker Bios



Hon. Susan Harper

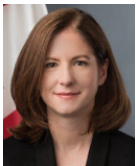
Consul General of Canada in Dallas

In November 2022, Susan became Consul General in Dallas, the senior representative of the Government in Canada, responsible for Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Her office, the Consulate General, covers economic, political, and public affairs, and provides consular and commercial services. The Consulate of Canada in Houston, which focuses on commercial issues, also reports to her office. In addition, these offices coordinate with several other key federal government departments, which focus on a range of issues, including energy, environment, security and defense, as well as with Canadian provinces that are active in the territory.

Previously, Harper was Consul General in Miami, Canada's Senior Arctic Official, and Director General in the trade policy area, covering policy, negotiations and regulatory issues. She was at the Embassy of Canada in Washington DC, where she became the Minister (Economic Affairs). From 2001 to 2004, she was Canada's Ambassador in Montevideo, Uruguay. She previously held trade positions in Yaoundé, Paris and Buenos Aires.

Prior to joining the Government of Canada, Harper taught at both Cambrian College in Sudbury, and George Brown College in Toronto. She holds an MBA from the Ivey School of Business, at Western University, and an Honours BA in Math and English, from Queen's University.

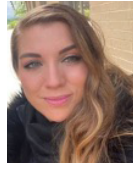
Harper has two children, who keep her diplomatic, financial and cross-border travel skills honed.



Hon. Sandra Shaddick

Consul General of Canada in Monterrey

Sandra Shaddick joined Canada's Foreign Ministry, Global Affairs, in 2001. At headquarters in Ottawa, she has worked for the Deputy Minister for International Trade and at the Privy Council Office. She has also served as deputy director in the Northeast Asia Division. Abroad, she served as trade commissioner in Washington, D.C. and as senior trade commissioner at Canada's Embassy in Lima, with responsibility for Peru and Bolivia, and subsequently, at Canada's Embassy in Buenos Aires, with responsibility for Argentina and Paraguay. Most recently, in 2019, she served as Executive Coordinator for Transparency Innovation and Compliance and promoted Open Government principles and practices at Global Affairs Canada. Since January 2020 she serves as Consul General of Canada in Monterrey, being the first woman to hold that position.



Lic. Devorah Karren Ibarra

Representing Secretary of Regional and Agricultural Development of Nuevo León

Devorah Karren represents the Government of the State of Nuevo Leon in the USA at the Laredo, Texas office. Her role as the International Affairs Director has allowed her to foster ties between Mexico and the United States. Building strategic international relationships with companies, dignitaries, ambassadors, CEO's, VP's, local and state authorities in terms of trade, business collaboration and cooperation in culture, security, economy and health. As well as coordinating and planning dignitaries international itineraries, MOU's, conventions, panels, and trade missions.

Her role promoting Port Colombia-Laredo has been crucial to leading it to be the 3rd most important port in the region. Bringing companies nationwide from Mexico and the United States and taking them through the process of exporting their merchandise north and south bound. She works to strengthen the ties with the Port Laredo and working together for the international bridge expansion. She is a wife, mother and entrepreneur too. Originally from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon but currently living in Laredo, Texas. She acquired a Bachelor's Degree in Education and is currently enrolled in a Master's Degree program in Business of Administration and Marketing from the University of TecMilenio of Monterrey.



Lic. Fernando Alba

Undersecretary, Secretary of Innovation and Economic Development of Chihuahua

Undersecretary of Mining, Industry and Energy for the Secretary of Innovation and Economic Development of the State of Chihuahua, Mexico.

Fernanda Alba previously worked as a consultant, executive and partner of companies in the private sector having worked in aerospace, electronics, and automotive industries as well as in Real Estate in Mexico and the U.S.

Fernanda Alba completed his master's degree in finance at the University of Chile with studies in management, finance, and information systems at the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Studies (ITESM), the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM), and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Speaker Bios



Ms. Helen Ramirez
City Manager, Brownsville, TX

Helen Ramirez is the City Manager for the great City of Brownsville, the largest city in the Rio Grande Valley – serving approximately 186,000 residents. She is the first female to serve the City of Brownsville as City Manager since its inception in 1848. Ms. Ramirez brings more than 20 years' experience in municipal government, urban planning, and economic development, including 10 years' experience working in the private sector. She joined the City of Brownsville in March of 2019 as Deputy City Manager while simultaneously serving, for a short period of time, as Executive Director & CEO of the Greater Brownsville Incentives Corporation (GBIC).

In her role as City Manager, Ms. Ramirez has been instrumental in accelerating economic growth, downtown redevelopment, overhauling development codes, preparing the City's first Mobility Transportation Plan and strengthening its organizational culture. Ms. Ramirez earned a Bachelor of Science in City & Regional Planning from California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo. She earned an American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification and is working towards an Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP) certification. She participates in the Texas City Managers Association (TCMA), is a member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). She formerly served on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RGVMPO).



Ms. Kathryn Lueders
Starbase General Manager, Space X

Kathryn Lueders is currently General Manager of Starbase, home of the SpaceX Starship transportation system. Kathryn Lueders recently retired from NASA on April 30, 2023. She served as the associate administrator of NASA's Space Operations Mission Directorate (SOMD), overseeing the International Space Station Program (ISS), the Commercial LEO Development Program, all communication and navigation services for NASA, all NASA Launch Activities, and overall crew operations across the human spaceflight portfolio.

Prior to that, Lueders served as the first female associate administrator for the Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate, managing the agency's full human spaceflight portfolio.

Before joining NASA Headquarters, Lueders was the manager of the Commercial Crew Program (CCP) at NASA's Kennedy Space Center which returned transport of NASA crew members back to US soil. Prior to leading CCP, Lueders served as the ISS Transportation Integration manager, at NASA's Johnson Space Center, overseeing all international spacecraft to the ISS, and also leading the first-time acquisition and successful first flights of the first commercial cargo services to the ISS.

Lueders began her NASA career in 1992 at the White Sands Test Facility in New Mexico, where she was the Shuttle Orbital Maneuvering System and Reaction Control Systems Depot manager.

Lueders holds a bachelor's degree in business administration finance from the University of New Mexico and bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial engineering from New Mexico State University. She is married and is most proud of her four children.

Border Trade Advisory Committee



Secretary of State
Hon. Jane Nelson
Presiding Officer



Rafael M. Aldrete
Texas Transportation
Institute



Mayor
Hon. Alvaro "Al" Arreola
City of Del Rio



Jon Barela
Borderplex Alliance



Luis Alfredo Bazán
Pharr International Bridge



Eduardo Calvo
El Paso MPO



John Esparza
Texas Trucking Association



Raquel Espinosa
Union Pacific Railroad



Juan Antonio Flores
Port San Antonio



Dante Galeazzi
Texas International
Produce Association



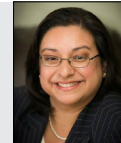
Cynthia Garza-Reyes
Pharr Economic
Development Corporation



Jake Giesbrecht
Presidio International
Port Authority



Maria-Elena Giner
International Boundary and
Water Commission



Iliana Holguin
Guadalupe-Tornillo Bridge



Lisa Loftus-Otway
Center for Transportation
Research, University of
Texas at Austin



Marga Lopez
Progreso
International Bridge



Stan Meador
Texas Pacific Transportation



Daniel Mendoza
BNSF Railway



Jason Modglin
Texas Alliance of Energy
Producers



Kyle Morgan
CPKC Railway



Juan Olaguibel
McAllen-Hidalgo-Anzalduas
International Bridge



Mayor
Hon. Rolando Salinas
City of Eagle Pass



Gerardo "Gerry" Schwebel
International Bank
of Commerce



Pete Sepulveda, Jr.
Cameron County
Bridge System



Daniel Silva
Rio Grande Valley Partnership



Roberto Tinajero
El Paso International
Bridge System



Mayor
Hon. Victor Treviño
City of Laredo



Sam Vale
Starr-Camargo Bridge
Company



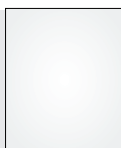
Cameron Walker
Permian Basin MPO



Carlos Yerena
Donna Port of Entry



Vacant
Port of Brownsville



Vacant
Rio Grande Valley MPO