

Zones of **Hope**

Challenges and Opportunities
in Improving U.S.-Mexico
Border Economic Micro-Zones

Project Overview



About Us

- Independent, nonprofit research organization.
- Research, outreach, impact (practical recommendations).
- U.S., Mexico and Canada.
- U.S.-Mexico border specialists.
- A border-wide approach.
- NAFTA for the Rest of Us
- Based in Phoenix and San Diego.



The U.S.-Mexico Border Economy in Transition

Edited by Erik Lee and Christopher Wilson



Competitive Border Communities

Mapping and Developing U.S.-Mexico Transborder Industries

By Christopher Wilson, Erik Lee, and Alma A. Becerra Calderin



North American
Research Partnership
RESEARCH, OUTREACH & IMPACT ON GLOBAL NORTH AMERICA

NAFTA for the Rest of Us

- Small- and Medium-Sized Businesses
- [Border] Communities
- Students
- Women Entrepreneurs
- Border Economic Micro-Zones

Two major border policy aspects addressed:

- Border Management
- The High-Level Economic Dialogue

How can we have a High-Level Economic Dialogue...



...with border crossings that look like this?



Photo courtesy of Tijuana Te Quiero.

Key recommendations from *The U.S.-Mexico Border Economy In Transition:*

- Promote cross-border urban planning and development in border communities.
- Support and develop inclusive binational Mega Regions along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Promote greater collaboration between regional universities, community colleges and technical schools, government and the private sector.
- Establish a binational education task force focused specifically on the border region.
- Consider new cross-border transportation options, such as (restored) trolley lines or dedicated bus lanes, which could reduce wait times and give a sense of binational unity.

All of this is made much, much more difficult with the congested, unpleasant and even unsafe pedestrian areas that we have today.

The Last Priority on the List

“The pedestrian environment is arguably the least *visible* and *attended* yet the most *impacted* of the three major types of crossings at ports of entry. And it is the most important for local commercial districts, neighborhoods and communities.”

A No-Man's Land

“The pedestrian zone is a no man’s land... People arrive at the ports with less of a sense of an enjoyable journey ahead than an experience to be endured.”

–Roberto Schroeder, CEO, Desarrolladora Zona Libre

“The primary challenge is creating a sense of place.”

**–David Mayagoitia, former Chairman of the Board,
CaliBaja MegaRegion**

What is a Border Economic Micro-Zone?

- Commercial area within comfortable walking distance of certain U.S.-Mexico ports of entry.
- Unique, binational mixed-use zones with commercial, historical and cultural significance.
- Would have a unique definition in each community.
- Spelled out in national legislation + bilateral agreements.
- Would allow for comprehensive and strategic planning, public input and investment.
- Funding mechanism(s)?



Preliminary Findings

- Exasperated pedestrian border crossers.
- Significant potential for economic development.
- Dug-in, largely unresponsive federal border security apparatus on both sides of the border.
- Lack of clear focus on the pedestrian experience.
- Broad-based dismay with the current state of these areas.
- Evidence for an emerging consensus in the private and public sectors.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. **Get together:** These leaders need to unite and show a clear and achievable bridge from the current state of affairs to one which is achievable, while engaging key sectors of society and levels of government.
2. **Identify what makes people stick around:** They need to clearly identify both attractions for new visitors to come and stay as well as conveniences and amenities to keep the current crossing flow longer.
3. **Engage new champions.** Leaders need to engage new champions on both sides of the border who can afford a sustained level of outreach effort with the various actors at the federal, state and local levels who hold the keys to building better Border Economic Micro-Zones.
4. **Advocate for a formal designation of these commercial areas as Border Economic Micro-Zones** in national legislation and bilateral agreements would create avenues for more strategic planning and investment.

Thank you. Let's stay in touch!

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