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Texas A&M International University

**Texas Center for Border Economic and
Enterprise Development**

QUARTERLY REPORT

Summer 2010

The 'Interoceanic Highway': A Bridge to Trade Between the North and South American Continent



Herbert A. Molina
Director
TCBEED
Texas A&M
International University

Last month the City of Laredo and Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) had the opportunity to be part of a high profiled trade mission with the country of Peru.

This undertaking was spearheaded by Mr. Sergio Vizcarra, President and General Manager of CETICOS-ILO (*Centro de Exportación, Transformación, Industria, Comercialización y Servicios-Ilo*), which will become one of the founders of the "Interoceanic Highway." This infrastructure will connect the countries of Brazil and Peru with the main objective of linking the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans for both commercial and touristic purposes by the end of 2010.

Furthermore, Laredo's private sector, City officials, and TAMIU representatives were personally invited by the CETICOS-ILO's executive team to partake in the celebration of this new and historical milestone between Brazil and Peru ensuring more international trade opportunities across the region, thus creating a perfect opportunity for the City of Laredo to build a networking channel amongst the largest private corporations and public agencies from Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Mexico.

How can Laredo reap benefits from this Interoceanic Highway? The answer is simple, the "Laredo Corridor"—composed by the Port of Laredo, and Mexican ports of Lazaro Cardenas and Manzanillo (located in the Pacific Ocean)—will be able to capture a significant amount of imports coming from Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and Mercosur.

For example, just in 2009 Brazil exported to Miami over US\$11 billion of goods, which Laredo will be able to handle a percentage of that share with the assistance of the Interoceanic Highway. The possibilities of

redirecting imports through the Port of Laredo are endless because Brazil's economy has been showing a positive growth of 3-4% on average, while Peru's economy has been growing at a pace of 7-8% in spite of the economic meltdown which started in late 2006. Not to mention the population that both countries share of 210 million people.

Therefore, as the globalization process continues taking place daily, the fact that Brazil and Peru have been able to work as a team to finish this highway represents a historic commitment by both nations to improve the regional economy.

So what does it mean for Laredo? What does it mean for Texas? What does it mean for the United States? In fact it means great and immediate opportunities to export American technology and goods in the form of any commodity to a consumer market potential of around 280 million consumers located in Peru, Brazil, and Mercosur.

—Herbert A. Molina, Director, Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development

Chamber Announces New Chairman for 2010-2011



Ed Ramirez
Chairman
Laredo Chamber of Commerce
2010-2011

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce announced that Mr. Ed Ramirez is the new Chairman of the Board for the Laredo Chamber of Commerce for the 2010-2011 year.

Mr. Ramirez was born and raised in Laredo, Texas and is a third generation Laredo businessman. He obtained his Bachelors in Business Administration in Accounting from Texas A&M, College Station in 1983.

After his educational achievement, he moved to San Antonio from 1983 until 1985 to serve as a member of Peat Mar-

wick (KPMG) professional team, working as an auditor. In 1985, Mr. Ramirez became a Certified Public Accountant and moved back to Laredo to pursue real estate investment opportunities. During the coming years, he started developing residential subdivisions and owner financing and eventually started leasing out residential and commercial properties. Now through various family partnerships, he

has taken keen interests in ranches and minerals, as well as, real estate rentals and notes.

Through the years, Mr. Ramirez has been part of a team, who although are still considered a very small business with three full time employees and two consultants, they have been able to finance hundreds of dollars to Laredoans who otherwise would not have been able to finance a residential property on their own.

Mr. Ramirez has served the community through various organizations including United Way, Bethany House, the State Bar Grievance Committee, and various committees for the United Independent School District. Furthermore, he has served as President of the Webb County Heritage Foundation and the Laredo Daybreak Rotary Club.

He has been married to Adriana Gonzalez Ramirez for almost fifteen years and has two children: Edmundo (11) and Sofia (8).

As Chairman of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, he is dedicated to focus on rehabilitating Laredo's image so that people will know that it is a safe and peaceful city. The Chamber, in conjunction with the Alliance of Laredo Business Associations, will lobby Washington and Austin for more appropriation for the City, especially in the areas of education and infrastructure.

Then and Now: A Glimpse at the Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development's Tech History

The Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development (TCBEED) also referred to as the Texas Center, and my history are intertwined. We have both come a long way. All the changes and improvements would not have been possible were it not for the help of past and present colleagues. Forward thinking and long range visioning have always been the impetus for growth and changes at the Center. Its many staff members throughout the years embraced those qualities. These individuals' innovative thinking and expertise provided the drive to push the Center forward in its growth even with limited resources.

In the earlier part of 1989, HB2974 made its way through the legislative branch of the State of Texas and was approved by both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This house bill became an act and with the final signature of then Governor of Texas, Bill Clements, it established a center for border economic and enterprise development at Pan American University (University of Texas-Pan American), Laredo State University (Texas A&M International University), and the University of Texas at El Paso.

Before my arrival on April 4, 1990, the TCBEED at Laredo State University (LSU) had already been busy with the hiring of staff, placement of new technology and new responsibilities under the establishment of the Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development Consortium. Each center established had their own strengths and were encouraged to continue developing those strengths along with coalescing them under the consortium.

The TCBEED's strength at LSU was its unique data sets compiled over several years prior to the establishment of the TCBEED. These sets included international crossing data at Texas-Mexico Border cities and the cities' economic indicators. With new hardware and software, the Center became more efficient in collecting data for the region, formatting and publishing of the data which permitted the timely dissemination of the *Border Business Indicators (BBI)*. The *BBI* had been in hiatus until all the TCBEED's functions could be solidified and shared maintenance with the Institute for International Trade (IIT) was worked out. The November 1990 issue of the *BBI* marked the restart of the informative publication and was made available to the public and private sectors of the region.

Technology wise, one could say that the Center was cutting edge for the area with six PC workstations, a file server, and the newest versions of Lotus 1-2-3, dBase III, WordPerfect, etc. For its time, these were the hottest items to have in a workplace, and they were used to run the everyday activities of compiling, formatting and disseminating data. All of the dissemination of data from the Center was via print in the form of the primary publication, *Border Business Indicators*, technical papers on area issues, and the *Vision Economic Outlook* reports, jointly published with the Laredo Chamber of Commerce.

In October 1991, I went on to another center to develop its operation, but returned to the Texas Center in September 1999. During this time, several former directors of the TCBEED had made data additions to those that were already in place at the Center. There were needs to be addressed with the additional sets. With the addition of U.S.-Mexico trade port of entry level data for the southwest U.S. border region, and its original data sets burgeoning with over a decade of data, an "accessibility" plan was developed and put into motion.

First in order was to determine the size and type of data that would be handled—allowing for future formats. Second

was to determine how flexible the system should be for application development for the purpose of automating data capture and dissemination. Last, the system needed to be robust and an industry standard that would be around for decades, since there would be a considerable amount of man-hours necessary to initiate and complete the data conversion from the medley of types.

Resources were allocated, and in Fall 2000, the Center took possession of the first Oracle Relational Database Management System (RDBMS) on the Texas A&M International University campus. The system consisted of a Dell Power Edge network server running Windows NT 4.0 with Oracle 8i RDBMS, an application server running proprietary applications developed with Visual Basic and a web server running Windows 2000.

The TCBEED was able to capitalize on the features of the system, and spent almost a year transferring and auditing over 10 years of data from legacy programs. Once the major transfer of data was accomplished, development of searchable web-based data sets became the major push of the staff. "Automation" was the catch word, and time was spent in developing the web site and internal research tools. By 2003, changes had been made to data delivery of the Center's international crossing data, economic indicators and international trade figures at the ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border.

At this point, the TCBEED opened new methods of access to its data on-line via the trade, crossing and economic indicators searchable web pages, and through publications that were posted in electronic form—PDF type documents. Along with these new means, the *BBI* (in its third iteration) continued to be printed, but with one difference, it was designed to be printed in-house if the need would arise—and it did in 2009, with the discontinuation of press services on campus.

With the start of a new decade, we have dusted off the wish list. We have begun to generate the priority list of software, hardware and training needs. We are ready to take the next step in the evolution of the TCBEED's data, its utilization and its accessibility—both internally and externally. As with everything tech, we have reviewed what may be innovative in the next 5 to 10 years, and have made allowances for future innovations.

As with everything, many factors can come into play and change the course of development. The TCBEED will continue to develop what it has, but will look into the development of other services, data, etc.

For now, the catch words for the TCBEED are "innovation" and "value-added." Those words resonate at the Center as it goes through the next step of improvements and upgrades to better serve the populace of the region.

Some of these changes are expected to be accomplished throughout 2011. Some will be whole new additions, but this "renovation period" will continue for the remainder of the decade. For those that are interested in these upcoming changes, subsequent *TCBEED Quarterly Reports* will keep everyone informed.

Looking back all those years, I can say they were challenging ones. Accomplishing what the Center's staff did with "bearskins and knives" over those 20 years is a credit to their ingenuity and gumption. Those same qualities are what will keep the Center relevant the next 20 years.

Being part of those 20 years has been enlightening and educational, and I look forward to another pair of decades.

—Baldomero G. Garcia, Jr., Program Manager, Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development

Border Business Indicators

The *Border Business Indicators (BBI)*, a Texas Center publication from 1990 to the present, has been in existence in a variety of formats since the 1980s. In its present configuration, the *BBI* covers twenty-two economic indicators for cities along the Rio Grande from Brownsville to El Paso, Texas.

On March 2003, the *Border Business Indicators* was reformatted to provide a more concise and "fast read" of the economic indicators for those cities on the Texas-Mexico border. In this current iteration, U.S.-Mexico trade information was incorporated as part of the monthly offerings in the *BBI*. Along with the inclusion of trade data, the fifteen indicators in the *BBI* publication were synchronized to the searchable data sets available on the on the Texas Center web site: <http://texascenter.tamui.edu>.

Vision Economic Outlook Report

The Texas Center's ongoing work with business and community organizations may result in a variety of collaborative publications and materials. One such publication is the *Vision Economic Outlook Report*.

The *Vision Economic Outlook Report* is prepared in cooperation with the Laredo Chamber of Commerce and has been in publication since the 1990s. The publication is distributed at the Vision Conferences held annually. The Vision Report provides a view of the City of Laredo's economic indicators, trade data and a timely point of the interest to the community. It is published once a year and is freely available at the Center's web site: <http://texascenter.tamui.edu>.

Texas Center Web Site

Since it first came on-line in 1998, the Texas Center's web site has been available to the public and has provided economic and trade data. From 2001, the Center has added searchable data directly from our data sets. In addition, links to other resources were included to guide users to other sites with valuable data and information. Subsequently, specialty publications were added to the site providing insight into the region. As the new decade approaches, the Center staff is working on plans to offer new data searches, filters, and reports. If you have not visited our site recently, do so as we start to upgrade our site <http://texascenter.tamui.edu>.

Texas Center Quarterly Report

First published in the Summer of 2009, the *Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development Quarterly Report* provides current information regarding on-going projects, additions or modifications to data sets and personnel changes.



Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development Quarterly Reports are prepared by the Center's staff for the purpose of communicating to the public the Center's mission, activities and services available to the area.

Have any questions about the Center, feel free to contact us at:

Texas A&M International University
Texas Center
5201 University Boulevard
Laredo, TX 78041

Voice: 956-326-2545
FAX: 956-326-2544
E-mail: texascenter@tamui.edu
Visit our web site: <http://texascenter.tamui.edu>