



December 29, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

The Border Trade Alliance writes to you once again to register our opposition to the management of the international bridges and land border ports of entry along the United States-Mexico border. The situation has become untenable, negatively affecting legitimate trade and travel, as well as the public safety of border communities. We urge you to reopen International Bridge I in Eagle Pass, Texas, the international port of entry at Lukeville, Arizona, and the PedWest pedestrian crossing at San Ysidro, California.

As you know, Customs and Border Protection in early December closed International Bridge I in Eagle Pass, a decision our organization opposed, just as we opposed the same bridge's closure in September. As we wrote in our letter to you dated September 21, 2023, such actions lead to shipping delays, increased costs, and an overall degradation of the powerful binational trade relationship between our two nations.

Adding to the disruption caused by the closure of Bridge I in Eagle Pass, the capacity of International Bridge II has been dramatically reduced, leading to hours-long waits for private vehicles and pedestrians, which lead to consequences far more grave than mere inconvenience. The BTA recently received a disturbing report that a U.S. citizen re-entering the U.S. via Bridge II suffered a fatal heart attack while waiting in the hours-long queue. First responders' access to the man was impeded due to the bumper-to-bumper queue. By the time they reached him near the toll booth on the Mexican side, he was already deceased. It is our understanding that at the time of the man's death only one inspection booth was open.

In addition to restoring service at the closed ports of entry, we also believe strongly that this event further illustrates that communication between DHS and local stakeholders must greatly improve. Decisions over closures, lane reductions, and the apparent prioritization of asylum seekers over regular commerce and the travel of U.S. citizens has been incredibly opaque, leading to rumor and speculation among border residents and leaving city officials with little guidance.

The BTA continues to acknowledge the complexities of addressing the migration challenges faced at the border, and we appreciate the efforts made by DHS to address these issues in a humane manner. Your job and that of CBP officers and Border Patrol agents is incredibly difficult, made even more so by an ever-shifting global political environment that affects migration patterns.

*Continued*

But U.S. border communities and the individuals whose livelihoods depend on a secure and efficient U.S.-Mexico border can no longer bear such a disproportionate burden for an international problem. We need solutions now.

The BTA has communicated to Congress on multiple occasions the need for a lasting, durable reform to our immigration system; the need for more resources for our inspection agencies; for more modern infrastructure to keep pace with trade demands; and we have made clear our strong opposition to government shutdowns that hurt the professionals at DHS who are responsible for keeping our borders secure. We are heartened that recent Senate negotiations on immigration policy appear to be productive, and we are hopeful that they will culminate in a positive result.

In the meantime, however, the BTA once again calls on DHS to reopen International Bridge I, restore capacity at Bridge II, as well as reopen the international port of entry at Lukeville, Arizona and the PedWest pedestrian crossing at San Ysidro, California.

These closures are devastating and, as we unfortunately saw recently at Eagle Pass, can be the difference between life and death.

Sincerely,



Britton Mullen  
President